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# Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Uber must take responsibility for drivers' safety: Driver in Hyderabad is attacked and his car severely damaged**

On 4 September 2022, Hyderabad-based Uber driver Syed Lateefuddin was allegedly attacked by a group of six men while on duty for the ride-hailing giant. In the early hours of Sunday around 3:30 am, Lateefuddin received a booking to drive a passenger from an isolated area in Shaikpet to Tolichowki. He alleged that, on his way to the pick-up point, six men on bikes began harassing him by hitting the back of his car. When he rolled down his window and asked them to stop, Lateefuddin determined that the men—upon identifying his religion based on his language and diction—began to chant “Jai Shri Ram” and follow his car on their bikes. Lateefuddin reported that they caught up with him at a dead-end, where two of the men forcibly opened his car door and started to beat him up, while continuing to chant “Jai Shri Ram”, while the other four men used large rocks to severely damage his car’s side windows and front windshield. Lateefuddin managed to momentarily push away the men beating him, and ran away and hid behind a nearby compound wall that was a little ways away from his car. From there, he called Uber’s emergency services several times without any response. He additionally also called the police who arrived at the scene shortly afterward.

The police took Lateefuddin’s statement, surveyed the scene and damage, checked the CCTV footage which matched with Lateefuddin’s account, and registered his complaint. Within 24 hours, they were able to apprehend the culprits, who have since been remanded in custody. Local residents who witnessed the incident also noted to the police that similar attacks on drivers had happened multiple times in that same area. Lateefuddin had minor injuries from the encounter for which he got treatment at a hospital. On the other hand, his car—and the means to his livelihood—has been severely damaged and will require Rs. 1-1.5 lakhs and several days to repair.

After the accident, Lateefuddin approached the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers’ Union (TGPWU) to seek help, with the goal of ensuring that similar accidents do not happen to other drivers. TGPWU has since reviewed various documents relating to the incident, including: the details of the Uber booking in Lateefuddin’s Uber app (which corroborates the location and time), photographs and video footage showing the damages to the car, a copy of the police complaint and hospital bill.

While Lateefuddin has thankfully survived this violent attack, it is evident that this incident could have easily resulted in his physical impairment, or even his death. While the police officials have completed their duties efficiently, **Uber has failed to adequately safeguard the driver in the first place, nor has it provided any support during or in the aftermath of this unfortunate accident.** This incident happened while Lateefuddin was on duty for Uber, driving to pick up a customer in an isolated and dark area, for a trip that the Uber algorithm assigned him. Uber did not even answer Lateefuddin’s repeated emergency calls while the incident was unfolding, leaving him stranded—this points to a severe inadequacy of the emergency infrastructure Uber claims to have in place for drivers’ safety. In the days since the



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incident took place, Uber has not contacted Lateefuddin to inquire after his well-being nor to offer any support. Moreover, this incident is not the first—there have been numerous such accidents across Indian cities in which Uber has failed to respond or provide drivers with support.

Uber's inaction in the face of such a serious accident (and numerous others) is an unacceptable failure to take accountability for their drivers' well-being and safety. In light of this failure, TGPWU makes the following demands of Uber:

1. Compensate Syed Lateefuddin for the costs of repairing his damaged vehicle.
2. Compensate Syed Lateefuddin for his hospital costs.
3. Provide Syed Lateefuddin with income compensation of Rs.1200 amount for each day that his vehicle is out of commission and he is unable to earn his livelihood.
4. Identify dangerous areas (in collaboration with drivers and unions) across Indian cities, and timebound bookings assigned to those areas (e.g. no bookings to dangerous areas after 9 pm).
5. Revamp Uber's emergency infrastructure for drivers' safety, and publicly announce Uber's commitments to drivers regarding emergency response times and available support.
6. Establish mechanisms to protect drivers from disadvantaged groups (e.g. women, religious minorities, sexual and gender minorities, etc.) from the dangers they commonly face while driving for Uber, and publicly announce Uber's commitments with regards to the same.

This event, and Uber's subsequent inaction, points to a serious failing in the ride-hailing sector in India. Drivers of all religions, communities and genders should be safe in doing this work, and it is Uber's responsibility to guarantee their protection. TGPWU is committed to advancing the interests of all in our driver community, regardless of religion, creed, caste or gender. We call on Uber to do the same for all the drivers risking their lives for Uber.

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