

# "We'll never pay tolls" say protestors

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Protesters campaigning against the e-tolling of highways in Gauteng vowed on Monday (11 February) never to buy e-tags or to pay for e-tolls, even if the system becomes law.



Moleen Tsedu, 34, said she joined the "drive-slow protests" because she was already struggling to cope economically.

"As it is now, I do not have enough to take care for my small family. If they [the government] implement this system, I do not know how I will survive," she said.

The mother of two said the price of fuel had steadily increased over the years, putting many workers under severe financial strains.

She joined the protesters in Pretoria and blew a vuvuzela as she drove.

James Pale said the government should foot the bill for the e-toll gantries erected on the freeways.

"As we march today, we are clearly saying no to e-tolling of our roads. Government must pay for those tolls, not the people," he said.

As the anti-toll procession made its way through the city centre, many people peered through their office windows. Some came out and waved in support.

Byron Heindrich said even though he did not have the time to join the convoy, he supported the protests.

"We are encouraged by men and women who find the time to protest on behalf of everyone. My job makes it difficult to be on the street protesting, but I back the idea 100%," he said.

Members of the Congress of the SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) protested across Pretoria on Monday (11 February), blocking major roads in the city before heading onto the N1 highway.

Cosatu Gauteng chairman Phutas Tseki said motorists should not pay for the e-tolls, as they had not been consulted about them.

"We were never consulted, even when these gantries were going up. In the absence of our involvement regarding our own roads, we are saying no to e-tolls," he told the protesters.

He said other events like picketing, sit-ins, protest marches and the signing of petitions would be held in the future.

Pointing to a nearby crowded Home Affairs refugee reception centre, Tseki said that with the rising cost of living, more and more South Africans were languishing in poverty.

"As Cosatu, we are worried when we see such things. I am not sure where we are going to run to. We have the sea on our left and right. At least they [refugees] could move from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and even as far as Nigeria to seek a better life," he said.

"We are saying to government, we the workers are not happy. The development of the transformation agenda is going astray from what we expected in 1994," Tseki said.

"We had the view that we were going to have free education [and] free movement on the roads. Government now wants to exclude some sections of society from these roads," he added.

Tseki said Cosatu hoped the transport department would "rescind its decision and review what they are saying".

The protesters' convoy and the police escort reached the N1 before 3pm.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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