

Protests in Orlando West

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On 30 May 2023, Orlando West residents were protesting against the installation of prepaid meters because they want a flat rate they can afford. They claim they simply cannot afford to pay and would rather be left in the dark. Orlando West is a township in Soweto, South Africa.

Some roads, including Vilakazi Street and Khumalo Street, remain closed after residents blockaded them with rocks on the day. Police are maintaining a high presence with the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department's (JMPD) Edna Mamonyane said:

"At this stage, we have arrested about 15 people, 14 males, and one female. They have been taken to Orlando Police Station. We haven't received what charges they will be charged with. We will remain in the area; we have some of the leaders of the community that we have been talking to."

Orlando West, combined with Orlando East, has a population of over 108,813 residents. Unemployment is at the rate of 2.5%, compared to 3.1% last year.

This is lower than the long-term average of 5.49%. Most residents of Orlando are the working class, which makes it understandable why they would protest such an issue. And taking a close look into the actions of Eskom in Orlando, it is believed their actions are another way to recover its losses and sustain itself. Proof of this was that the residents were not informed about this change as it was decided upon and implemented without their consent or input.

On the other hand, the response of Orlando West residents showed a lot of impulsiveness as it resulted in roads being blocked to prevent any form of vehicle movement within the area. This meant that public transport services had to find alternative routes which in most cases take longer to reach the required destination. An inconvenience to the working-class people that are not part of the protest as they are the ones using public transport.

A lack of planning, common understanding, and analyzing of the advantages and disadvantages of solutions, remains a big challenge for the working class. This is because if solutions taken by the working class, become the cause of problems for the working class then that means, there is no way forward. Solutions should bring about change, and not support the cycle of socio-economic issues that are unending.

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