

Jozi Vendors Don't Know Their Rights!

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The 'City of Gold' is packed with street vendors: from corner to corner there is someone selling something, but are these vendors aware of their rights? *Karibu!* went into the streets of Johannesburg to find out, and the response was shocking.

"My sister, we don't know any rights, we are just selling here," said Abraham, a Malawian vendor who sells fruit from a trolley at the corner of Mooi Street in the centre of town. Vendors are not aware of any union, or of any rights they possess largely because many of them are not South African locals. This may be the reason why vendors had their goods seized so easily by authorities last year in 2022.

"We pay 25 Rand each week to Madala to sell here," said Abraham. The man referred to as 'Madala', is a security guard who works in the Fashion District, at a shop located at the corner of Pritchard Street. This man is apparently in charge of every corner in the area and collects R25 per week from each vendor. "We don't know where the money goes," Abraham stated.

When vendors are evicted from their street corners by the metro police, no one helps them. In addition, many vendors also have to buy their seized goods back from the police with bribes if they do not have the "relevant documents," which are yet to be specified to us. This creates a large loss for vendors who are selling fruit and vegetables especially because by the time their wares are returned, their wares are usually rotten.

Another vendor, also from Malawi, who sells vegetables for a living, mentioned a lady known only as 'Mama', who helps vendors keep their spots after police raids. Unlike Madala from the Fashion District, Mama does this voluntarily and she does not expect any payment in return. So, what rights do street vendors have? This question remains unanswered.

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