

Violent NEHAWU strikers affecting Robben Island tourism

The ongoing strike by Robben Island staff over wage increases and festive season leave turned violent on Saturday, 5 November 2011, as strikers tried to prevent tourists from boarding the Robben Island ferry, forcing the cancellation of all tours that day.

Due to the shortage of staff since the start of the strike, Robben Island has offered only two of its regular four daily trips from the V&A Waterfront; and previous strike activities from 26 October to 4 November had been peaceful until this point. This reduced service continued to run on Sunday, 6 November 2011.

CEO of Cape Town Tourism, Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold, said: "Robben Island is an important heritage site for South Africa and a key visitor attraction for Cape Town. Anything that affects access to Robben Island, such as non-operational boats or strikes, is unfortunate as it not only affects travellers who have already booked seats, often some months in advance, but also affects visitors' overall perception of Cape Town as a destination. We trust that the issues affecting operations at Robben Island are being resolved with urgency as Cape Town heads towards the festive season."

Services have been restored

The Robben Island Museum's CEO, Sibongiseni Mkhize, stated: "Robben Island Museum would like to apologise to all its stakeholders for the inconvenience that has been caused by the ongoing strike by members of NEHAWU. RIM Management is particularly disturbed by the incident that happened on Saturday, 5 November, when NEHAWU members invaded the ferry and interfered with RIM's operations. We would like to assure our visitors, tour operators and members of the public that services have been restored and Robben Island Museum managed to continue running their tours on Sunday. The management has decided to seek legal advice regarding the incident that took place on Saturday. The council and management of Robben Island Museum will make all efforts to ensure that the strike comes to an end as a matter of urgency in order to ensure uninterrupted service to our visitors. I wish to thank all our stakeholders for their support and understanding during this very difficult period."

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