LUFTHANSA TO CANCEL 930 FLIGHTS ON WEDNESDAY DUE TO STRIKE

News / Airlines



Lufthansa will have to cancel 930 flights on Wednesday after cabin crews continued what is shaping up to be the longest strike in the German airline's history, even after a court ruled it must stop Tuesday's walkout at one airport.

Flight attendants started striking last Friday over early retirement benefits and pensions and the cabin crew union raised the pressure on Tuesday by calling for walkouts on short- and long-haul flights at Frankfurt, Duesseldorf and Munich airports from 3:00 a.m. GMT on Wednesday through to 11:00 p.m. GMT on Friday.

Lufansa said in a statement it would have to cancel 930 flights to and from the three airports, affecting about 100,000 passengers, adding that management remained ready to talk to the union but only if they first end the strike.

Lufthansa filed for temporary injunctions at labour courts in Darmstadt and Duesseldorf after four days of strikes resulted in more than 1,800 flights being cancelled and left hundreds of thousands of passengers stranded.

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The court in Duesseldorf halted Tuesday's strike for crews at Duesseldorf airport, ruling that the strike was illegal because the union had not clearly defined its aims and demands. It is due to consider an additional request by Lufthansa to end the planned strike up until Friday on Wednesday afternoon.

However, the court in Darmstadt rejected Lufthansa's bid for an injunction to stop the strike, although the decision is likely to face an appeal in a higher court.

The airline is negotiating with various staff groups as it tries to bring costs down to compete with budget rivals and Gulf carriers and has been hit by strikes as a result, with the cabin crew protests coming after walkouts by pilots.

"As management we are forced to explore our legal options, but I would rather find a solution at the negotiating table," Lufthansa Chief Executive Officer Carsten Spohr said on the sidelines of an event in Berlin on Tuesday.

Lufthansa said the union had offered to end the strike and enter into mediation earlier on Tuesday but had later announced it would continue its strike.

The union, which represents 19,000 flight attendants, said it was open for talks but would not first call off strike action as Lufthansa has demanded as a precondition.

Separately, German pilots' union Vereinigung Cockpit (VC) filed a complaint with Germany's constitutional court to challenge a legal ruling that forced it to halt its strikes at Lufthansa in September.

The union has held more than a dozen strikes over the last 18 months, but the last one was stopped when a court in Hesse ruled on Sep. 9 that the pilots had overstepped their mandate by striking against strategic company decisions.

VC said its complaint was based on two grounds: that the court was wrong in saying the pilots were striking for reasons other than early retirement benefits, and that the court had wrongly assumed the jurisdiction of a higher federal court.

The court said at the time that in this dispute the pilots were only supposed to be on strike over pay issues but an analysis of union statements showed the protests also centred on opposition to the expansion of Lufthansa's budget airline.

A spokesman for the Karlsruhe-based constitutional court said no date had been set yet for the hearing.

Lufthansa shares closed down 1 percent, underperforming the DAX Index .

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