

Spain says Ryanair violated right to strike: unions

November 26 2018

Spain has found Ryanair guilty of violating cabin crews' right to strike and work safety regulations as well as obstructing labour inspections, threatening to fine the low-frills airline for 16 infractions, unions said Monday.

The labour ministry found that the company, by emailing or calling employees to see if they would stop work before planned strikes on July 25 and 26, and September 28, had infringed on their right to strike, the USO and Sitcpla unions said.

The labour ministry confirmed to AFP that it had "given the company notice of infractions," but refused to reveal further details.

Europe's biggest low cost airline has been clashing with worker representatives for close to a year over contracts—with the firm using Irish legislation for its employment agreements even for those employees based in other countries—as well as over pay and work conditions.

In July, strikes by cockpit and cabin crew disrupted 600 flights in Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, affecting 100,000 travellers.

Then on September 28, cabin crew walked out again in Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain and in some countries pilots' unions also took action.

In a statement, Ryanair—which can appeal the infractions—said it had

"no knowledge of these 'proposals'," referring to the ministry's proposals to fine the airline.

"We respect the labour rights of our employees in accordance with Irish, Spanish and EU legislation."

Inspectors 'obstructed'

A resolution issued by the Spanish ministry's labour inspection department on November 22, seen by AFP, said that some of those responsible for Ryanair bases in Spain had "obstructed" the work of inspectors when they showed up to investigate accusations the airline had violated the right to strike.

"Those responsible for the bases—or those acting as such—told the inspectors that they did not have the necessary information to duly attend to the labour inspection, having obstructed, in some cases, their verification work," the resolution said.

It added that based on those interviews it had managed to conduct with employees, it concluded that the company had violated workers' right to strike by asking them via email whether they planned to stop work, and in some cases following up by phone.

It also said the company put more staff on airport or home standby than normal, which meant there was not enough space and furniture for the higher number of employees on standby in airports, violating work safety rules.

As such, it proposes to fine them for a total of 16 infractions—15 serious and one very serious—although the exact amount was not stipulated.

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