

Fresh SAS woe as strike grounds 110,000 travellers

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A further 110,000 air passengers faced being left grounded after

Scandinavian carrier SAS on Sunday cancelled 1,213 flights as pilot strike action spiralled.

Pilots demanding better pay and conditions walked off the job in Sweden, Denmark and Norway on Friday and the disruption is now expected to hit some 280,000 travellers overall.

SAS had initially predicted that 170,000 passengers would be affected by the end of Sunday, but now says a further 667 Monday flights and 546 more due Tuesday will be annulled.

The stoppage by 1,409 pilots is affecting domestic, European and long-haul [flights](#).

The Swedish Air Line Pilots Association, which initiated the strike, has said that months of talks have failed to find a solution to pilots' "deteriorating [work conditions](#), unpredictable work schedules and job insecurity".

"No discussion is currently underway between the two parties," Rawaz Nermany, president of the association, said on Sunday.

"To overcome our differences, SAS must show a real willingness to discuss and meet around the negotiating table," he told the Swedish TT agency.

But the Swedish Confederation of Transport Enterprises insists it cannot accept a demand for a 13-percent wage increase, given their "already high average wage of 93,000 kronor (8,766 euros, \$9,769) a month".

The pilots' association say work schedules, not wages, are their main gripe as most SAS pilots have to work at variable times and days and sometimes have to work several weekends in a row.

SAS has implemented repeated savings programmes in recent years to improve its profitability, after almost going bankrupt in 2012.

"If SAS gives in to the demands of the pilots, we can be pretty sure that in a few quarters, SAS will be in deficit and will have to fight to survive," Jacob Pedersen, chief analyst of the Danish bank Sydbank, told the Ritzau agency.

In the first quarter of 2019, the airline widened its losses, impacted by negative exchange effects and high fuel prices.

It posted a net loss of 469 million kroner, compared to 249 million a year earlier.

Although the carrier forecast a full-year profit Sydbank on Friday predicted the strike would cost SAS 60 to 80 million kroner (\$6 million to \$8 million) per day.

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