

Talks resume between SAS and pilots as more flights cancelled

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Nearly 350,000 passengers have been affected since SAS pilots walked off the job in Sweden, Denmark and Norway on Friday

Negotiations have resumed between Scandinavian airline SAS and its striking pilots, a mediator said Wednesday, as hundreds more flights

were cancelled due to the strike action which has affected over 380,000 passengers.

It is the first time both sides have sat down together for talks since SAS pilots walked off the job in Sweden, Denmark and Norway on Friday demanding better pay and conditions, though they met prior to the walkout.

"There are discussions underway in Oslo. They concern the three countries," Jan Sjolín, a spokesman for the Swedish National Mediation Office, told AFP.

Despite the resumed negotiations SAS still cancelled flights that had been scheduled for Thursday.

Around lunchtime on Wednesday the airline announced it was cancelling 280 flights scheduled up to 2:00pm (1200 GMT) Thursday, affecting 20,000 passengers.

Then shortly after 10pm (2000 GMT), with negotiations still going on in Oslo, SAS announced it was cancelling another 429 flights, affecting another 34,590 passengers.

That brings the total of cancelled flights to over 4,000 since the stoppage by 1,409 pilots hit domestic, European and long-haul SAS flights.

"The situation is still very much deadlocked. The parties have not been able to agree," mediator Mats Wilhelm Ruland told media Wednesday evening, adding however that both parties had signalled they wished to continue negotiations, Norwegian daily VG reported.

The Swedish Air Line Pilots Association, which initiated the strike, has said that months of previous talks had failed to result in a solution to

pilots' "deteriorating work conditions, unpredictable work schedules and job insecurity".

It added that work schedules, not wages, are the SAS pilots' main gripe as most have to work at variable times and days and sometimes several weekends in a row.

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

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