



AIR FRANCE TRIES TO GET PASSENGERS ON ITS SIDE FOLLOWING EMBARRASSING LABOR FIGHT

News / Airlines



Air France sent an unusual appeal Friday to its **passengers** worldwide, insisting that the violent, clothes-ripping protests against executives earlier should not scar the airline's reputation.

Its appeal came on the day unions and Air France management resumed negotiations over hotly contested job cuts for the first time since activists assaulted airline executives Monday and left two of them shirtless and clambering over a fence to safety.

"I am sure that like all of us, you were shocked by the events," Air France said in an emailed statement to customers. "We are doing all we can to earn your trust."

Air France heaped blame for the "violent" acts on "isolated individuals" and said it needed to "brave steps" to stay competitive.

The airline has been losing money since 2008, amid pressure from low-cost rivals and cash-rich Gulf state carriers. It has gradually cut costs and jobs in recent years and is now in talks with unions over a sweeping plan that involves 2,900 more job losses and longer hours.

Negotiations broke down after Monday's violence and resumed Friday between managers and leading pilots unions SNPL and SPAF on Friday. Neither the unions nor Air France commented on the talks publicly.

The government, which owns 17 percent of Air France, backs the restructuring plan and was embarrassed by Monday's violence. Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron told CNN that the incident "is not about France. It's about stupid people, and they will be condemned for that."

Macron is trying to loosen France's famously stringent labor protections , hoping that will encourage companies to hire and reduce the country's 10 percent unemployment rate. His moves have angered unions and fellow members within the Socialist government.

The resumed negotiations capped a week of unusually high labor tensions in France.

In addition to the incidents involving Air France, the streets of Paris overflowed with garbage as about half the city's waste workers went on strike over wage and career stagnation.

After four days of disruption, city officials and unions reached an agreement Thursday night to end the walkout. City hall said it agreed to raise pay for certain workers and consider expanding promotion opportunities.

11 OCTOBER 2015

SOURCE: SKIFT

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