

Major airlines halt flights to Israel

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New York: Major airlines cancelled dozens of flights to Tel Aviv after the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a surprise attack against Israel.

American Airlines, Air France, Lufthansa, Emirates, Air India and Ryanair are among those pulling flights to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport.

However, airport authorities did not stop commercial air links with Israel's second international airport at Eilat, a tourist destination on the Red Sea.

And Israeli flag carrier El Al said Sunday that it was maintaining its Tel Aviv flights for now, though some flights operated by foreign partners had been cancelled.

El Al said it was operating "in accordance with the instructions of the Israeli security forces", with all flights now departing only from Terminal Three at Ben Gurion.

Like most other airlines, it said clients could change their tickets without charge.

In Athens, the foreign ministry said it was working to repatriate 149 Greek tourists from Israel, and 81 of them were due to arrive back late Sunday on an El Al flight.

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After Saturday saw a list of major carriers cancelling flights Spain's AENA airports operator told AFP four of nine flights scheduled to Tel Aviv on Sunday had been cancelled, two from Madrid and two from Barcelona.

Another nine flights, from Tel Aviv to airports in Spain, have so far been unaffected, the operator said.

Spain's Air Europa said it had cancelled its two flights scheduled between Madrid and Tel Aviv, while Iberia Express, the low-cost arm of national carrier Iberia, went ahead with a Madrid-Tel Aviv flight after suspending two on Saturday.

Vueling, the Barcelona-based low-cost airline, said given the situation in Israel, "flights to/from Tel Aviv are affected and experiencing delays".

A spokesman for Germany's Lufthansa on Saturday cited "the current security situation" to say it was cancelling all flights to and from Tel Aviv "up until and including Monday".

Air France said it had halted Tel Aviv flights "until further notice", and the Air France-KLM group's low-cost carrier Transavia said it was cancelling all flights from Paris and Lyon to Tel Aviv up to and including Monday.

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Italy's flag-carrier ITA airways cancelled its flight until Sunday morning at the earliest "to protect the safety of passengers and crew", while Polish carrier LOT scrapped its flights from the Polish capital on Saturday.

Other airlines suspending flights included Aegean, Swiss, Austrian Airlines, Wizz Air and Air Canada.

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