

Virgin flight from London to Mumbai stranded for 40 hours

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: A Virgin Atlantic flight from London to Mumbai, which departed Heathrow on April 2, 2025, and was scheduled to land in India's largest city about nine hours later, turned into a two-day ordeal for the 250 passengers on board. A medical emergency during the flight and a subsequent emergency landing at an airport in southeastern Turkey caused a technical issue that grounded the Airbus A350-1000. Passengers were left stranded without adequate assistance, according to social media complaints.

Virgin Atlantic confirmed, "The VS358 flight from London Heathrow to Mumbai on April 2 was cancelled due to an urgent medical diversion to Diyarbakir Airport in Turkey, followed by necessary technical inspections." The airline added, "The safety and security of our customers and crew is always our top priority, and we apologise for the inconvenience caused."

That inconvenience included “barely any food, one toilet amongst 275 pax, phones running out of batteries as they don’t have Turkish adapters,” said Indian politician Preeti Sharma Menon, a national spokesperson for the Aam Aadmi Party, who was on the flight. She pointed out that children, pregnant women, diabetics and elderly people were among those putting up with the lack of facilities and support.

Journalist Loveena Tandon described receiving a “distress call” from someone on the flight who said that babies were running out of nappies. Photographs posted by Tandon show angry crowds surrounding a man in a police uniform.

Those accounts of events matched that of passenger Hanuman Dass on X, who wrote: “My family along with 250+ passengers have been inhumanely treated by @virginatlantic. It’s now been 30 hours since @VirginAtlantic flight left London and we are appalled at the lack of humanity and treatment of #Indian and #British citizens. My wife and kids have one pillow between 3 people and no blankets and have been sat in a confined space with 300 people.”

Diyarkabir is the largest Kurdish-majority city in Türkiye and its airport is a military airbase as well as a regional public-facing facility. Online reviews describe the airport as “old and small” with an “insufficient waiting area.” Some travellers say they have experienced issues with authorities there accusing them of participating in fighting in Syria, whose border is about three hours away.

The Indian Embassy in Istanbul said in a statement it had liaised with Turkish immigration to ensure all 99 Indian passengers on board were issued with temporary visas, which meant they could access “Hotel accommodation, meals & medical assistance.”

Although Virgin claimed “we will keep all customers informed as soon as new updates become available,” passengers complained that they were left without information for hours. The onward flight to Mumbai eventually left Diyarkabir at 1:00 pm local time on Friday 4 April, landing just before 9:00 pm there. Virgin said in a response to Tandon on X that customers had been provided with details on how to claim compensation for the experience.

