



Global Pilots on Ryanair Flight 4978

MONTREAL / BRUSSELS - The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) and the European Cockpit Association (ECA) fully share the concerns expressed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding the forced landing of Ryanair Flight 4978 in Minsk, Belarus, on 23 May. Pilots are concerned that the intervention of the Belarussian Air Force was enacted for political reasons, in contravention of the Chicago Convention, and amounts to an act of unlawful interference, bearing all the hallmarks of state-sponsored hijacking.

We are calling for an independent enquiry into this occurrence and appropriate immediate response by safety and security authorities. This unprecedented act of unlawful interference will potentially upend all the assumptions about the safest response to bomb threats on flight and interceptions. Without trust and reliable information from States and Air Navigation Service Providers, handling both types of events becomes much riskier to manage.

IFALPA and ECA stress that the pilot-in-command always has the best overview of the actual situation on board and must be able to react according to the level of risk, regardless of external circumstances. Any measures taken by States to address a specific threat should enhance the crew's ability to assess the situation thoroughly.

Any military intervention against a civilian aircraft constitutes a wilful hazard to the safety of passengers and crew. IFALPA and ECA urge States and the International Aviation Community to investigate and take swift measures against similar occurrences. We also call upon the airline to provide full support to the pilots and cabin crew on board, both during the future investigation and regarding their physical and mental well-being after such a challenging and stressful event.

For more information, please contact:

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Note to Editors:

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations represents more than 100,000 pilots in nearly 100 countries around the globe. The mission of IFALPA is to promote the highest level of aviation safety worldwide and to be the global advocate of the piloting profession; providing representation, services and support to both our members and the aviation industry.

ECA is the representative body of over 40,000 pilots from across Europe, striving for the highest levels of aviation safety and fostering social rights and quality employment for pilots in Europe. Website: www.eurocockpit.be & twitter @eu_cockpit

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