

BA suspends Tel Aviv flights after Hamas says it attacked airport

British Airways (BA) has suspended flights to Tel Aviv – after Hamas said it had attacked the Israeli airport.

It came after a BA flight was on approach to the airport when the captain made the decision to divert back to Heathrow.

A spokesperson for Israel's airports authority said rockets were flying around Tel Aviv at the time but were not an immediate threat to the flight or to Ben Gurion Airport.

Hamas's armed military wing said a missile had struck the grounds.

Al Qassam Brigades said it had "bombarded" the site in response to civilians being targeted by Israel.

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Information from flight-tracking website Flightradar showed the flight in question, BA165, had almost reached Tel Aviv when the landing was aborted.

Its imagery suggested that the plane banked to the right and continued back over the Mediterranean, largely retracing its inbound flight path from Heathrow.

The incident took place before Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, who is in Israel on a solidarity visit, was forced to run for shelter when a siren warning of rocket fire sounded.

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Cleverly runs for cover in Israel

British Airways, which had been among only a handful of global airlines to continue flights to and from Tel Aviv since Saturday's attack on Israel by Hamas, said safety was always its "highest priority".

"Following the latest assessment of the situation we're suspending our flights to and from Tel Aviv", the airline's statement continued.

"We're contacting customers booked to travel to or from Tel Aviv to apologise for the inconvenience and offer options including a full refund and rebooking with another airline or with British Airways at a later date.

"We continue to monitor the situation in the region closely."

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Other airlines, including Ryanair, easyJet and Wizz halted services to Tel Aviv earlier in the week and were largely expected to maintain that position until such time air space was free of military threat.

Virgin Atlantic, which had curbed its schedule, was yet to make a decision on whether all its flights to the city would now be suspended.

A spokesperson said: "The safety of our customers and our teams is our number one priority, always.

"We're currently reviewing our flying programme and no further decision has been taken yet."