

Hijackers threaten to blow up Libyan aircraft; release women, children

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Malta: The two hijackers, who diverted a Libyan flight with 118 passengers on board to Malta, have threatened to blow it up with hand grenades, Maltese authorities and state media said.

Hijacked Libyan stands on the tarmac at Malta's Luqa International airport

All the women and children on board the flight have been released, news agency AFP reported.

Local media reports suggest that the hijackers are pro-Gaddafi supporters who have threatened to blow up the plane and keep the passengers hostage onboard unless certain, as yet unknown, demands are met.

Authorities said that all emergency teams had been dispatched to the site as there was an unlawful interference at the airport.

Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat, said in a tweet that there was a "potential hijack situation involving an internal Libyan flight that was diverted to Malta and that emergency operations are underway at the airport".

The aeroplane, Afriqiyah Airbus A320, landed in Malta at around 11:32am, local time. It is one of three A320s that Afriqiyah, a state-owned airline based in Tripoli, owns.

The plane, flight number 8U209, left Sabha in south-west Libya for Tripoli at 10:10am, local time. It was scheduled to arrive in Tripoli at 11:20am, but was instead diverted to Malta International Airport at 11:20.

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