

Talks to end Hollywood actors strike ‘suspended’: studios

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Online Desk: Talks between Hollywood actors and studios over an ongoing strike were suspended Wednesday, in a blow to hopes for a swift end to a crisis that has crippled the entertainment industry. Heads of studios such as Disney and Netflix had been meeting regularly since last week with negotiators for the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA), whose members walked off film and TV sets in July. But in a statement issued late Wednesday, the studios said talks had ground to a halt and would be temporarily suspended. “After meaningful conversations, it is clear that the gap between the AMPTP and SAG-AFTRA is too great, and conversations are no longer moving us in a productive direction,” said the studios.

The studios are represented at talks by the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). Last month, the AMPTP struck a deal with Hollywood writers, ending that union’s own lengthy and largely concurrent strike. Given that deal, and overlaps between SAG-AFTRA’s demands and those of the writers, optimism had been growing that a deal with the actors could be struck soon, too. Even with writers now back to work, most film and TV productions cannot restart until the demands of SAG-AFTRA are resolved, costing the entertainment industry and its workers millions of dollars each day.

In Wednesday’s statement, the AMPTP accused actors of making excessive demands, including for a share of revenues from hit streaming shows that “by itself, would cost more than \$800 million per year.” Studios described that as an “untenable economic burden.” They also accused SAG-AFTRA of rejecting parallel wage increases that had been accepted by the writers’ and directors’ unions earlier this year. “We hope that SAG-AFTRA will reconsider and return to productive negotiations soon,” said the studios. SAG-AFTRA did not immediately comment.

Like the writers, actors have called for improved pay, greater transparency over profits from hit streaming shows, and protections against the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. SAG-AFTRA pay demands go further than those of the writers. Their concerns about the threat posed to them by AI also arguably run deeper. Actors fear that the technology could be used to clone their voices and likenesses, and reuse them in perpetuity without compensation or consent. Some film and TV productions involving smaller Hollywood studios have already resumed, thanks to temporary waivers known as “interim agreements.”