
R Kelly's concerts doubtful post sexual assault charges

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R. Kelly's hopes of doing a tour of Europe in April have been all but dashed now that he is facing new criminal charges.

Kelly defiantly scheduled concerts in two locations in Germany and one in the Netherlands in April despite a cloud of legal issues in the wake of the recently aired Lifetime documentary series "Surviving R. Kelly" that delved into his alleged history of sexually abusing young women and girls. Kelly has denied engaging in sexual misconduct.

But the concerts appear to be scuttled with Friday's charges accusing him of sexual abuse involving four victims.

Even before the charges, venues and promoters abroad were feeling heat to cancel future concerts by the R&B star.

Activists from the #MeToo and #MuteRKelly social media movements have been using the renewed attention around the documentary to press overseas venues to scrap planned Kelly shows. Oronike Odeyele, co-founder of the #MuteRKelly movement in Atlanta, said activists knew of Kelly's planned European performances and were tipped off to his attempts to get picked up by promoters in Latin American countries.

"We're trying to make sure that doesn't happen, and still trying to put the word out there," Odeyele said.

The European concerts were the only confirmed concert dates for Kelly, 52. The Germany shows were scheduled in Neu-Ulm and Hamburg and a third one was slated to be held in Amsterdam.

Ratiopharm Arena in Neu-Ulm warned on its Facebook page that it could shut down the concert if "new facts" emerged.

"We have the possibility to unilaterally cancel the contract with the organizer if R. Kelly is sentenced by a court or if

he or his management (concedes) to the allegations,” Ratiopharm Arena spokesman Richard King wrote in response to emailed questions from The Associated Press prior to Friday’s announcement of charges.

Ratiopharm Arena did not immediately respond to messages about the new charges.

The April 12 concert was originally scheduled to take place in the town of Ludwigsburg in southwestern Germany. But in late January — after the Lifetime documentary aired in the United States — the organizers canceled that venue and moved it to nearby Sindelfingen.

Organizers of the Sindelfingen concert later canceled due to massive online protests. The online petition, called #RKELLYSTUMMSCHALTEN or “silence R. Kelly,” had been signed by more than 230,000 people.

The second Germany show was scheduled on April 14 in Hamburg. The operator of the Sporthalle Hamburg arena told the AP that the venue tried to cancel its contract with Kelly’s representatives to no avail. The arena said it was up to the organizer, Thomas Bernard.

“Talks with the organizer to cancel the concert amicably, were not successful,” Daniel Gritz, spokesman for the city’s district of Hamburg-Nord, wrote in an email. “It is therefore up to the organizer to evaluate whether it is opportune to let the concert take place as planned on April 14.”

Bernard did not return messages seeking comment, but he issued a statement to ARD public television in Germany last month that stood by the decision hold the concerts.

“Kelly has many fans worldwide, who want to experience the artist and his music live. Everybody can decide freely if he wants to visit the concert or not,” the statement said.

Both the Hamburg and the Neu-Ulm venue operators said they could not comment on the number of tickets sold so far.

Earlier this month, Kelly announced tour dates in Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka in a tweet but then deleted the post. It was not known how far long concerts had been planned for those countries or if they were canceled after the airing of the “Surviving R. Kelly” documentary.

Kelly has performed overseas a number of times. He did a show in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on New Year’s Eve 2010. He also performed at the World Cup in 2010 before the opening soccer match between South Africa and Mexico in Johannesburg, South Africa. He toured throughout Europe as part of his 2011 Love Letter Tour.
