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U.S. Affiliate of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists

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February 1, 2023

Ed Bastian
Chief Executive Officer
Delta Airlines

By [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Bastian,

The American Association of Jewish Lawyers & Jurists (AAJLJ) is the voluntary bar association of American Jewish lawyers. We are a national nonprofit association that represents the American Jewish legal community on legal issues that affect, and are of importance to, the community, including; freedom of religion, civil rights, human rights, access to justice, social justice, and defense of the rule of law. The Association also advocates upon and defends against matters affecting the global Jewish community such as antisemitism in the workplace, on college campuses or in public.

We were deeply concerned to witness the video showing, [REDACTED], an Hassidic Jew who was escorted off FLL – LGA Delta Flight 1541 on January 23, 2023 for the “violation” of placing a hat holder in a semi-empty overhead compartment. The pretext for his being escorted off was that he stored two items in the overhead compartment rather than one. We are led to understand that he was not disruptive and offered to move the hat holder were space to become an issue, despite being referred to as “you people.”

At first blush, the actions of the single flight attendant seem to be over officious at the very least, but her actions are all the more galling since there was an abundance of space and the hat holder was of negligible weight. The most obvious reason for the attendant’s actions seems evident to the most casual observer, and it is antisemitism.

It is clearly an issue that Delta has no policy to stop acts of discrimination in their tracks as and when they arise. We are informed that other flight attendants were extremely pleasant and apologetic, but the offending flight attendant refused to work her shift if Mr. [REDACTED] was to be permitted to stay on board.

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While it is understood that to have another flight attendant step in at very short notice is inconvenient for Delta, however, if the account is correct, the innocent passenger was sacrificed to appease the feelings of the violative and irrational aggressor. It is appalling that no other passenger came to the aid or assistance of Mr. [REDACTED] but it is likely that they were concerned that they would also be summarily turfed off the flight. Such an occurrence cannot be allowed to happen again. While not Hassidic myself, I could not even fathom the embarrassment of being escorted off a plane, whether in front of family or not, purely on account of my race or being part of an ethnic group. There are even reports of other passengers removing their kippot (skullcaps) so that they would not be targeted by the Delta staff and be treated in a similarly discriminatory manner. To hear that a young boy experienced this, and that Delta readily acquiesced in such flagrant acts of antisemitism is cripplingly sad.

While, I would dearly like to engage with the flight attendant herself, if she did not realize at the time that her actions were arbitrary and she was exhibiting clear prejudice, I am not confident that she can learn this lesson. However, a policy must be instituted allowing other flight attendants, or the captain, who I thought was ultimately in charge of the flight, to override the actions of a flight attendant applying rules arbitrarily and in a discriminatory fashion. Certainly, offenders should know that the power is not in their hands to hold the flight to ransom, while demanding that a passenger is removed.

It is imperative that Delta broadens its diversity training and provide heightened and urgent courses to its employees so that they can recognize and combat anti-Semitism. The fact that there was no way to avert Jews being discriminated against demonstrates that there is a flaw in Delta's training and processes. If Delta would like some assistance, there are many at the AAJLJ that would be only too happy to be involved in the process.

Please explain the remediation process that is being offered to Mr. [REDACTED] and the discipline against the attendant involved.

Yours Sincerely,



Robert Garson
President