



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 1, 2011

Has Delta Airlines Signed on to Anti-Jewish Saudi Policy?

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a conservative legal advocacy group, is targeting Delta Airlines' new partnership with Saudi Arabian Airlines, charging that the venture serves to further discriminatory policies the Saudi passenger carrier has in place that target Jews, Christians, and women. In January Delta announced its partnership with the Saudi airline, with Delta's vice president, Charlie Pappas, saying he was "honored that Saudi Arabian [Airlines] has chosen to link its future growth and success with Delta and our SkyTeam partners, while bringing our alliance greater access to destinations across the Middle East."



But as reported by [World Net Daily](#), the partnership, part of Delta's "[SkyTeam Alliance](#)," may require the U.S. carrier "to ban Jews and holders of Israeli passports from boarding flights from New York or Washington bound for Jeddah." The move prompted an outcry from ACLJ and others that the airline is participating in discriminatory Muslim-based "Shariah" law — all for the sake of a business deal.

"For Delta to form a business relationship with a country that has a disturbing record of human rights violations is not only problematic, but warrants further scrutiny from the federal government and Congress," said Jay Sekulow, ACLJ's president and chief counsel.

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The issue first came to light when Washington attorney Jeffrey Lovitky uncovered the discriminatory policy while making travel arrangements. Lovitky personally queried Delta CEO Richard Anderson on the strange policy, but was referred instead to "customer care" agent Kathy M. Johnston, who claimed that the policy was beyond the control of Delta to fix, since it dealt with the laws of another country.

In a letter to Lovitky, Johnston pointed out that Delta was forced to "comply with all applicable laws in every country it serves," adding that its passengers "are responsible to obtain the necessary travel documents required for entry into another country prior to their day of travel."

She warned that if a passenger "travels without proper documents, the passenger may be denied entry into that country and our airline may be fined. Delta assumes responsibility for ensuring that each passenger boarding our aircraft has the proper documents for travel to their ticketed destination."

Lovitky argued that while Saudi Arabia is free to pursue whatever policies it desires on its own soil, when its discrimination bleeds over into the U.S. it becomes a problem. In a letter to Delta officials, he noted that the American carrier "acted in a purely voluntary manner in agreeing to this alliance with Saudi Airlines. Accordingly, Delta has made itself responsible for ensuring that passengers on any flight jointly operated with Saudi Airlines will not be subject to discrimination on the basis of their gender, religion, or any other inappropriate grounds."



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World Net Daily noted that in addition to outright banning certain passengers from flights, Saudi restrictions for passengers “could include clothing requirements for women and banning passengers from ‘carrying and reading religious literature of their choice.’” Lovitky told WND that such restrictions could extend to “both Christian and Jewish sacred texts, such as the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as any objects that reflect their religion, such as a cross necklace.” Added the attorney, “You can imagine how foreign it is to our values as Americans. To adhere to restrictions of this nature is extremely burdensome. This needs to be addressed in a way which is consistent with our Western values.”

Lovitky said that Congress has considered legislation to deal with Saudi Arabia’s discriminatory policies, including its refusal to issue visas to those holding Israeli passports or passports with Israeli arrival/departure stamp, as well as refusing individuals who don’t abide by certain Saudi traditions concerning “appearance and behaviors,” and, specifically, Jewish people.

In his letter to Delta, Lovitky pointed out that the airline is “prohibited from engaging in religious discrimination by a variety of state and federal laws, as well as its own Code of Ethics.” However, he warned, “Delta would be directly involving itself in the most heinous form of religious discrimination if it were to enter into any code share or other reciprocal travel arrangements with any airline which refuses boarding to individuals of specific religious persuasions.”

Lovitky urged Delta “to shun any reciprocal travel arrangements with Saudi Arabian Airlines until the government of Saudi Arabia provides assurances that persons who acknowledge being Jewish on their visa applications will be granted visas.”

The ACLJ’s Jay Sekulow noted that Delta insists “it does not discriminate in its business practices, but then says it cannot control what other nations do. Delta can’t have it both ways. If you choose to do business with a government that discriminates on the basis of religion, ethnicity, and gender — you simply cannot brush it aside.”

Sekulow said that he was calling for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to jump into the conflict, and further encouraged Congress to investigate, noting that U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (R-Ill) had sent a letter to the FAA requesting that it “determine whether Delta Air Lines violated U.S. law or regulation and to ensure no U.S. citizen is denied their right to fly solely on the basis of their religion.”

Concluded Sekulow: “We believe this is an issue of the utmost importance and we’re confident members of Congress will want to examine this transaction and relationship very closely, as they should.”



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