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CAIR Issues Travel Advisory on New Airport Pat-Downs

TSA 'enhanced pat-downs' described as invasive, humiliating

WASHINGTON, Nov. 10, 2010 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) today issued a travel advisory for airline passengers who may be subjected to new Transportation Security Administration (TSA) "enhanced pat-downs" that many of those who undergo the procedure describe as invasive and humiliating.

The advisory comes after two of the nation's largest pilots' unions urged commercial pilots to avoid both full-body scanners and public pat-downs. Pilots have compared the new pat-downs to "sexual molestation." A union for flight attendants has expressed similar concerns.

SEE: [Pilots Refusing to Use Full Body Scanners or Submit to Patdown](#)

<http://tinyurl.com/2vco9kb>

Flight Attendants Union Upset Over New Pat-Down Procedures

<http://tinyurl.com/22p3sb6>

TSA Statement on New Pat-Down

http://www.tsa.gov/press/happenings/102810_patdown.shtm

ACLU: TSA Pat-Down Search Abuse

<http://tinyurl.com/yaacvj4>

Travelers are being asked to educate themselves about the new policy and to know their rights if asked to undergo security pat-downs. CAIR's advisory is particularly important for Muslim travelers leaving for or returning from Hajj because of concerns that they will be singled out for secondary screening by security personnel.

CAIR offices have already received complaints, particularly from female travelers who wear hijab, about being subjected to the new pat-down procedure.

The enhanced pat-down involves a much more intrusive manual search of passengers' bodies by TSA officers. Passengers who have undergone the new pat-down procedure have reported feeling humiliated by a search they describe as invasive and that has involved TSA officers touching the face and hair, the groin area and buttocks, and in between and underneath breasts.

SEE: [CNN Report on TSA Pat-Down](#)

<http://tinyurl.com/2barrow>

Pilot Refuses Full-Body Pat

<http://tinyurl.com/2d5zuyk>

One traveler wearing hijab, a 56-year-old Muslim flying out of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, told CAIR the TSA screener patted-down her entire upper body, including, head, neck, chest, and hips, with the backs of her hands. The Muslim woman said she had "no idea" how invasive the procedure would be and would otherwise have opted for a private room or demanded to know why she was selected for secondary screening.

[NOTE: The woman had been referred to secondary screening even though the metal detector did not go off, a phenomenon reported frequently to CAIR by female Muslim travelers.]

BACKGROUND: Beginning earlier this year, the TSA began using full-imaging scanners in airports. In February, CAIR supported a statement by a prominent group of Muslim scholars that the full-body scanners violate religious and privacy rights.

SEE: [Airport Body Scanners Violate Islamic Law, Muslims Say](#)

<http://tinyurl.com/ye72g2f>

As of August 2010, passengers who opted out of the full-body scanners were subject to the enhanced pat-down.

In light of the growing concerns about the invasiveness of the new enhanced pat-down procedure, CAIR offered the following recommendations to Muslim travelers:

* If you opt out of the full-image body scanner, you have the right to request that the manual search be conducted in private.

* It is your right to be screened by an officer of the same gender. The TSA states in its Head-to-Toe Screening Policies: "It is TSA's policy that passengers should be screened by an officer of the same gender in a professional, respectful manner."

SEE: [TSA's Head-to-Toe Screening Policies](#)

http://www.tsa.gov/press/happenings/sop_facts.shtm

* If you experience any disturbing incidents with the new pat down procedure, particularly if you feel you have been subjected to religious or racial profiling, harassment or unfair treatment, immediately file a complaint with the TSA and report the incident to your local CAIR chapter.

SEE: [Civil Rights for Travelers](#)

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http://www.tsa.dhs.gov/what_we_do/civilrights/travelers.shtm

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<http://www.cair.com/Chapters.aspx>

CAIR also offered special recommendations for Muslim women who wear hijab:

* If you are selected for secondary screening after you go through the metal detector and it does not go off, and "sss" is not written on your boarding pass, ask the TSA officer if the reason you are being selected is because of your head scarf.

* In this situation, you may be asked to submit to a pat-down or to go through a full body scanner. If you are selected for the scanner, you may ask to go through a pat-down instead.

* Before you are patted down, you should remind the TSA officer that they are only supposed to pat down the area in question, in this scenario, your head and neck. They SHOULD NOT subject you to a full-body or partial-body pat-down.

* You may ask to be taken to a private room for the pat-down procedure.

* Instead of the pat-down, you can always request to pat down your own scarf, including head and neck area, and have the officers perform a chemical swipe of your hands.

* If you encounter any issues, ask to speak to a supervisor immediately. They are there to assist you.

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

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