

Passenger Flights Carrying Deportees

BACKGROUND

There are necessary and important guidelines that crews should follow when passengers are carried who are not travelling of their own volition. Such flights often present challenging scenarios and there may be political and humanitarian viewpoints to be considered.

Deportations are the result of a state judicial or administrative process. It is important to understand that Operators, Aircraft Commanders, and their crew are not involved in these decisions, nor can they be held responsible for deportees after their disembarkation at destination.

In some cases, flights carrying deportees will face some form of threat or disruption, from the deportees themselves or from other passengers and/or pressure groups. Airlines who transport deportees have become targets for criticism and face pressure from some organizations to stop deportations on grounds of ethical, moral, and political motives. Actions have included demonstrations at the airport and occasionally disruption on board. There have also been cases of extreme pressure, publicity, and (increasingly) the challenging of individual airline employees in person or on social media.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMANDER

The Tokyo Convention grants the Commander the full authority to refuse to transport certain passengers, including deportees, if there is any concern that to do so may jeopardize the safety, security, or good order of the flight. As the above provisions are widely known, certain parties believe that Commanders could use this authority to refuse to transport deportees. However, such authority was granted exclusively for flight safety and security reasons. Such authority cannot be used as a political or ethical tool.

GOOD PRACTICES

When facing political pressure, intimidation, or demonstrations, crews should remain calm, neutral, and professional. It is imperative that such events should be dealt with in the same manner as any other form of unruly behaviour. Onboard, the safety of the aircraft should remain the absolute priority and any disruptive behaviour, such as refusal to follow crew instructions, should not be tolerated. Crews should also refrain from commenting or expressing opinions on deportations and instead direct their questions to their operating companies or State Authorities.

POSITION

IFALPA strongly condemns any form of intimidation of crew members, as well as the use of aircraft as an environment for any kind of demonstration, regardless of the motive. Should such actions be so serious that safety is considered to be jeopardized, perpetrators should be treated in the same way as any other disruptive passengers.