

MEDIA RELEASE

AIRPORTS COMPANY SOUTH AFRICA RESPONDS TO REPORTS OF TRAVELLERS REMANDED IN AN INAD FACILITY AT O. R. TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

BEDFORDVIEW, 27 March 2020 – Airports Company South Africa is most concerned by media reports and videos published on social media about the treatment of foreign travellers denied entry to South Africa earlier this week and placed in the INAD (“inadmissible”) facility at O. R. Tambo International Airport.

Airports Company South Africa respects the human rights of all people including those who have been ordered by Immigration Services officials to be detained pending repatriation. The individuals held at the INAD facility were treated in accordance with these standards, in spite of several of them defying the law that applies to people lawfully detained for immigration reasons.

O.R. Tambo International Airport, solely as the infrastructure provider of the INAD facilities to airlines, ensures that the facility is well maintained and that the detained travellers’ security, health and safety are not compromised.

Senior management of the airport regularly inspects the facility to ensure that it meets acceptable standards for human occupancy. The claims made about the quality and state of the INAD facility are false.

Photographs taken immediately after the first claims were made (and which accompany this statement) show that this detention facility conforms to global standards and requirements. It is well maintained and professionally run. However, it remains a detention facility rather than a hotel.

The INAD facility is currently empty. Enquiries about how the individual cases were resolved should be directed to the Department of Home Affairs as the entity of state responsible for immigration control, as well as to the airline on which the passenger travelled to South Africa.

Airports Company South Africa wishes to emphasise that the decision to deny entry and detain an individual is made by officials of Immigration Services not management of the airport. Once entry has been denied, the process is as follows:

- The airline is notified and both an Immigration Officer and an airline representative accompany the passenger to the INAD facility;
- The airline takes responsibility and books the passenger into the INAD facility and carries the associated costs; and
- Once the airline is in a position to repatriate the passenger, Immigration Services is notified, and the passenger is processed to board the aircraft back to the country of origin.

The passenger remains the responsibility of the airline at all times. It is always the responsibility of the airline to ensure that it does not board passengers who are not entitled to be in South Africa. It is the responsibility of the airline to remain abreast of the latest requirements of the government of South Africa.

It is the responsibility of individual travellers to ensure that they have verified with the airline that they can travel to South Africa before they board a flight. Travellers should not rely on social media when establishing whether they will be permitted to enter South Africa.

It was made clear through Ministerial briefings early in the week that all visas were cancelled, regardless of country or point of origin with no exceptions or special circumstances. It was the responsibility of the airlines to act swiftly on this announcement.

It is most regrettable that some passengers arrived in South Africa who were not entitled to travel here.

However, Airports Company South Africa emphasises that detained passengers are treated in accordance with the law and that the INAD facility is professionally run and well maintained.

Specifically, the INAD facility has a baby room, family room, beds with clean bedding, showers, ablution facilities, washing machines, clothes drying machines, furniture and communal eating facilities.

The INAD facility is well stocked with clean white linen, toiletries including sanitary towels, toilet paper, soap, disinfectant sprays, baby food and diapers. It has a business centre with charging points, printer, copier and scanner.

Passengers detained in the INAD facility are typically angry and frustrated about being denied entry to South Africa. However, the claims made about the facility remain false.

The efficient operation of an airport involves a multitude of complex tasks that require close coordination among a host of public and private sector entities. It is essential that each entity manages its responsibilities in collaboration with others.

Airports Company South Africa is acutely aware of the extraordinary events of the past several weeks and that our resources and those of stakeholders have been stretched. We are most appreciative of the efforts of all entities during this challenging time. We remain committed to collaborating closely with all parties to ensure that our airports are ready to resume operations when ports of entry are once again open.

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