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Aussie Women Win Right to Sue Qatar Airways

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– Categories: Crime



Five Australian women have been granted permission by an Australian court to proceed with legal action against Qatar Airways over alleged invasive strip searches conducted in 2020 at Doha's Hamad International Airport.

The New South Wales Court of Appeal ruled on Thursday that the women can sue the airline in Australia for its alleged role in the incident. The women were among a group of female passengers removed from a Qatar Airways flight bound for Sydney after a newborn baby was found abandoned in an airport bathroom.

According to court filings and public reports, the women claim they were escorted off the plane by armed Qatari authorities without explanation and subjected to non-consensual and invasive examinations. Some of the women allege they were forced to remove their underwear and undergo intimate physical checks inside ambulances parked on the airport tarmac.

The examinations were reportedly conducted to determine whether any of the women had recently given birth. The incident caused significant diplomatic tension between Australia and Qatar at the time and sparked public outcry over the treatment of female travellers.

Damian Sturzaker, a lawyer representing the women from Marque Lawyers in Sydney, said the ruling allows the women to seek justice through the Australian legal system.

“Our clients endured a traumatic experience on that night in Doha, and they deserve to have their day in court and compensation for their suffering,” Sturzaker said, as reported by Reuters.

Qatar Airways had sought to have the legal claim dismissed, arguing that the events occurred outside Australian jurisdiction and were the responsibility of Qatari authorities. However, the Court of Appeal found there were sufficient grounds to allow the case to proceed in Australia, particularly as the airline is being held accountable for its involvement.

The women are seeking damages over what they describe as a violation of their privacy and human rights. The case is expected to continue through the Australian courts, with further hearings anticipated in the coming months.

The Qatari government has previously expressed regret over the incident but maintained that the actions taken were to locate the mother of the abandoned child. The child was later found to be safe and in the care of authorities.

This legal development is being closely watched as it may set a precedent for holding international airlines accountable for passenger welfare, even when incidents occur outside Australian borders.