BRITISH MAN FORCED OFF EASYJET PLANE AFTER PASSENGER SAW MESSAGE ABOUT 'PRAYER' ON HIS PHONE

News / Airlines

A British man was removed from from an easyJet plane by armed officers after a passenger saw a message on his phone about 'prayer' and reported him as a security threat.

Laolu Opebiyi, 40, a Christian, born in Nigeria and now living in London,was ordered off the flight at Luton Airport and asked if he was converting to Islam as the 6.45am flight to Amsterdam took off without him.

A fellow passenger saw a conversation on his phone, in the messaging group WhatsApp, and misread the title of the group 'Isi men' as 'Isis men', he says.

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Mr Opebiyi, a business analyst, was then asked: “What do you mean by ‘prayer’?” and the passenger walked towards the cockpit, asking to get off, it is reported.

Luton Airport

Image not found or type unknown

Luton Airport Photo: Alamy

Another six passengers are also reported to have left the plane.

Two armed police officers then arrived and told Mr Opebiyi to pick up his belongings and get off the plane too.

They repeatedly questioned him about his faith, which church he attended in London and whether he was considering converting to Islam.

He told the Guardian: “Even if I was a Muslim, it was pretty unfair the way I was treated. I don't think anyone, irrespective of their religion should be treated in such a way.

“If we keep on giving into this kind of bigotry and irrational fear, I dare say that the terrorists will have achieved their aim.”

Laolu Opebiyi is a member of a WhatsApp prayer group called 'Isi men'.

'Isi' is a short version of the Bible proverb: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another”.

It is often used by Christians to describe how prayer and discussing the Bible can improve people involved.

Once he explained this to the officers, he was told he could continue on his journey.

He eventually travelled to Amsterdam on the 10.25am flight - four hours after he was originally due to fly.

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Mr Opebiyi said: "Someone felt I was a terrorist because they saw the word 'prayer' on my phone and now I stand in uncertainty about my freedom of movement in and out of the UK."

Bedforshire Police confimed they removed an individual from the flight but said they “were satisfied that there was no concern around the passenger travelling.”

A spokesman for easyJet said: “The safety and security of its passengers and crew is our highest priority which means that if a security concern is raised we will always investigate it as a precautionary measure. We would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused to the passenger."

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