

Ryanair to keep racist Afrikaans test for South African passengers



Low-cost carrier Ryanair will continue requiring South African passengers to take an Afrikaans test to enter the United Kingdom, despite receiving criticism of “backward profiling,” the company has said in a statement to the BBC.

Pretoria, June 10 (RHC)-- Low-cost carrier Ryanair will continue requiring South African passengers to take an Afrikaans test to enter the United Kingdom, despite receiving criticism of “backward profiling,” the company has said in a statement to the BBC.

Europe's largest airline by passenger numbers does not operate flights to and from South Africa. So it requires any South African passport holder flying to Britain from elsewhere in Europe on the carrier, to prove their nationality.

However, its "simple questionnaire" is in Afrikaans, one of 11 official South African languages. Afrikaans is spoken by only 12 percent of the country's estimated 60 million people, mainly the white minority, and was used in the oppression of Black citizens during apartheid.

The airline cited a high prevalence of fraudulent South African passports behind the requirement to fill out the test. "This is why Ryanair must ensure that all passengers (especially South African citizens) travel on a valid SA passport/visa as required by UK Immigration," the BBC reported the airline as saying.

The UK High Commission in South Africa said on Twitter that the Ryanair test was not a British government requirement to enter the United Kingdom.

Ryanair's spokesperson said that fliers who failed to answer the questions would be "refused travel and issued with a full refund." In a statement, South Africa's Department of Home Affairs said: "We are taken aback by the decision of this airline because the Department regularly communicates with all airlines to update them on how to validate South African passports, including the look and feel."

Zinhle Novazi, a South African lawyer, faced the test, which included naming the highest mountain, its largest city and one national holiday, when travelling by Ryanair from Ibiza, Spain, to London on May 29.

"I was able to answer the questions," said Novazi, who learned Afrikaans in school but is not a native speaker of the language. She was then allowed to board the plane.

The test triggered a backlash from South Africans in Johannesburg. "They're using this (test) in a manner that is utterly absurd," Conrad Steenkamp, the chief executive officer of the Afrikaans Language Council, said.

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