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PRESS RELEASE

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*Tanenbaum CEO, Joyce Dubensky is available to speak with the press.*

## **Tanenbaum Urges Religious and Cultural Competency Training for Aeroméxico**

**New York, NY, February 9, 2016:** Yesterday Sikh American actor Waris Ahluwalia was denied entry onto an Aeroméxico flight from México City for wearing a turban. Aeroméxico personnel requested that he remove the turban – or purchase a ticket on another airline.

Speaking on behalf of the Tanenbaum | Center for Interreligious Understanding, its CEO Joyce Dubensky condemned the conduct of the Aeroméxico personnel. “What happened to Mr. Ahluwalia is a travesty. It is humiliating, disrespectful and unnecessary, even in these days when security is a real issue,” said Dubensky. “Sadly, this is not a unique experience.” Over an 18-month period, the Sikh Coalition found that 105 complaints (53%) filed against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security alleged religious discrimination.

Dubensky added, “From Mr. Ahluwalia’s perspective, this was a personal injustice. And for Aeroméxico, it was really bad business. In this climate of heightened security, Aeroméxico does not have to compromise safety for respect. As México’s largest airline, Aeroméxico must train screening personnel on how to respectfully screen passengers wearing religious headwear and clothing.”

One solution that Tanenbaum proposes is having screeners provide privacy for people who wear turbans or other religious coverings so they can be screened, if appropriate, by a same-sex airline employee. “In many instances, people will cooperate with airline personnel in private, as long as they are not being asked to publicly expose themselves and violate their religious beliefs,” Dubensky explained.

Like many Sikhs, Ahluwalia described how his turban and beard represent his commitment to justice and equality. “As fellow travelers, we should all encourage airlines and national security agencies to practice religious and cultural respect, while maintaining real security. Because what happened to Mr. Ahluwalia is inexcusable and it shouldn’t happen to anyone.” Dubensky said.

Tanenbaum offers a range of trainings and resources to help companies leverage religious diversity, create inclusive work environments and meet financial business goals.

*Tanenbaum is a secular, non-sectarian nonprofit that systematically dismantles religious prejudice by tackling religious bullying of students, harassment in workplaces and disparate health treatment for people based on their beliefs. More information about Tanenbaum’s offerings can be found here: <https://tanenbaum.org/>*

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