Who is Responsible for Tourists' Security?

By Joseph Fischer ~ Exclusive for 4Hoteliers.com
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Exclusive Feature: The most recent tragic terror attack in Tunis targeting western tourists raises again the question:

Who is responsible to inform tourists of security concerns in their holiday destinations?

This weekend, the headlines of leading European newspapers were full of rather graphic images of slain tourists on the beach in a popular resort in Tunis.

It is now crystal clear that terrorist groups in North Africa and in the Middle East are specifically targeting western tourists for two main reasons:

- Huge impact on the local economies – In the case of Tunisia 473,000 Tunisian jobs are supported by travel and tourism, 15.2% of the Economy is generated from Travel and Tourism, 13.8% of Tunisians are employed in the tourism Industry, 6.1 million tourists visited Tunisia in 2014
- Targeting western tourist guarantees almost for sure great media coverage around the world.

So, when we travel to a destination we consult our travel agent, while many go to look in "TripAdvisor" and other popular user-related content review sites for popularity and recommendations, but who tells us if it safe to go to a destination?

In all western countries as well as in Asian and in the Russian Federation there is a department in the Foreign Office issuing statements about the security and safety of travel to different destinations around the world, but, and there is a big but, some of those Foreign Offices statements are influenced by political pressure.

Many of these countries that are on the unofficially declared 'red-list' for business travelers and officials are considered as limited or no risk destinations for tourists. The reason is simple - Economy.

Most, if not all of those countries are dependent on TOURISM as their main industry. Crippling the tourism industry is exactly what the terror groups are aiming to do.

What about the large Tour Operators? In the Tunisian Terror attack two of Europe's leading tour operators – Thomas Cook and TUI issued statements about their efforts to bring tourists back.

Will Tour Operators have a real and true interest to check the safety of some of their most popular holiday resorts? (taking into account that they also own or operate hotels in those destinations) I seriously doubt it.

Travel Insurance Companies: That's a different story. These companies are supposed to make risk mitigation and analysis and pass it on the traveler.

It will be interesting to see what some of the victims in the Tunisia Terror attack will receive from their insurers. I guess that not much because in the small letters and legal caveats some, if not all insurers take out terror from the policy.

Back in January 2015 following the Terror attacks in Paris, I wrote an <u>exclusive article</u> for 4Hoteliers.com titled:

"Better Safe than Sorry – Hotels in major European Cities need to be vigilant and ready"

Unfortunately, terror sees tourism as a real 'soft-target'.

As leaders of the travel and tourism industry we need to take responsibility and make sure that the security and wellbeing of our guests is our top priority.

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