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## **LAWYERS SUPPORT MP IN AIR TRAVEL ACCIDENTS CAMPAIGN**

A new international agreement which comes into force this week offers fairer compensation for some air travel accidents but still fails to accept liability for injuries to health, a leading lawyer's association has warned.

The Montreal Convention replaces the 75-year-old Warsaw Convention, which set a compensation limit of around £50,000 per passenger. It will be introduced in at least 30 countries today, but the UK will not be included until the European Union has ratified the convention on behalf of all its 15 members. This is likely to happen when Austria completes its internal ratification process – the last of the EU countries to do so.

In the meantime, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has joined forces with John Smith MP to campaign for two small word changes to the Convention which, if implemented, will enable victims to obtain compensation for injuries relating to health.

“The introduction of the Montreal Convention will offer better compensation for death and psychological injury caused by an accident,” he said. “But what really concerns me is that conditions such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and psychiatric injury - which may arise from the trauma of a crash landing – will not be recognised.

“Just two small changes to the wording would change this, and ensure victims receive the compensation to which they should be entitled.”

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The 5,000-strong Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), is backing John Smith's call and intends to lobby the European Parliament to make the necessary changes to the Convention's wording, before Parliament ratifies it.

APIL secretary Mark Harvey, who has dealt with victims in the aftermath of major disasters, says unless the wording is changed, many people will be denied access to justice.

"It is utterly bizarre that my clients from the Ladbroke Grove and Southall train crashes can be compensated for psychiatric injury, but my clients from an air crash which, by its very nature, is at least as traumatic as a rail crash, can not," he said.

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**Note to editors:**

\* The word changes to the Montreal Convention which John Smith MP and APIL are lobbying for are:

1. Change the word *accident* to *incident*
2. Change the words *bodily injury*, which is taken from French (the language in which the Warsaw Convention was written, to *personal injury*, which is the modern equivalent.

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