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Jury awards \$49.5M to the family of a woman killed in 2019 Boeing Max crash

A federal jury in Chicago has awarded \$49.5 million to the family of a 24-year-old nonprofit global health worker killed in the 2019 crash of a Boeing 737 Max jet in Ethiopia



FILE - Michael Stumo, holding a photo of his daughter Samya Stumo, and his wife Nadia Milleron, sit behind FAA Administrator Steve Dickson during a Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation hearing on the implementation of aviation safety reform at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Nov. 3, 2021. (AP Photo/Amanda Andrade-Rhoades, File)

By
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Yamat | AP

A federal jury has awarded \$49.5 million to the family of a 24-year-old global nonprofit worker killed in the 2019 crash of a Boeing 737 Max jet in Ethiopia while traveling to her first major assignment.

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The verdict, reached Wednesday after a trial in federal court in Chicago, resolves one of the last remaining wrongful death lawsuits filed in connection with the disaster that killed all 157 people aboard Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302.

Samya Stumo , who grew up in Sheffield, Massachusetts, had recently joined a nonprofit focused on strengthening health systems in developing countries. A 2015 graduate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, she was traveling to Uganda for what would have been her first major project with the organization when the plane crashed minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa on March 10, 2019.

A spokesperson for UMass after the crash described her as someone known “for engaging others by earning their respect, friendship and trust.”

Jurors awarded \$21 million for the pain and suffering and emotional distress that Stumo experienced aboard the doomed flight, \$16.5 million for the loss of companionship suffered by her family and \$12 million for their grief, according to attorneys representing her estate.

“We are gratified for the opportunity to try the compensatory damages case,” attorneys Shanin Specter and Elizabeth Crawford said in a statement Wednesday evening announcing the verdict.

It is the second verdict tied to the crash. Boeing has reached confidential pre-trial settlements in most of the dozens of wrongful death lawsuits filed in connection with the Ethiopian Airlines disaster and a similar 737 Max crash five months earlier off the coast of Indonesia that together killed 346 people.

The fatal crashes became a defining crisis for Boeing and the 737 Max program. Investigators found that a flight-control system repeatedly forced the nose of the then-new planes downward based on faulty readings from a single sensor, and pilots in both crashes were unable to regain control.

The verdict follows a November 2025 jury award of \$28.45 million to the family of Shikha Garg , a United Nations environmental consultant who also died in the 2019 crash. That case marked the first civil jury trial stemming from the disaster, with jurors similarly tasked only with calculating damages because Boeing has accepted liability.

“We are deeply sorry to all who lost loved ones on Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302. While we have resolved nearly all of these claims through settlements,

families are entitled to pursue their claims through the court process, and we respect their right to do so,” a Boeing spokesperson said Thursday in a statement.

The Ethiopian Airlines crash prompted a worldwide grounding of the 737 Max that lasted more than a year and triggered multiple investigations into Boeing’s safety culture and regulatory oversight.

Federal prosecutors later charged Boeing with misleading regulators about the Max’s flight-control system, though in November, the federal judge in Texas overseeing the long-running criminal case approved a Justice Department request to dismiss it . Prosecutors reached an agreement with Boeing, requiring the company to invest an additional \$1 billion in fines, family compensation and safety improvements.

Stumo’s family has been among the most outspoken relatives seeking accountability from Boeing and changes to federal aviation oversight. Her father, Michael Stumo, has publicly pressed Boeing, regulators and Congress over what families viewed as failures that allowed the 737 Max to keep flying after the first crash off the coast of Indonesia.