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WORLD

US jury awards USD49.5M damages to Boeing 737 MAX victim's family

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NEW YORK (AFP) – A United States (US) jury awarded USD49.5 million in damages to the family of a 24-year-old American who perished in a 2019 Boeing 737 MAX crash.

The suit was brought by relatives of Samya Stumo, who died in the March 2019 Ethiopian Airlines crash which claimed a total of 157 lives.

The Chicago jury, which deliberated for around two hours, found that “the total amount of damages suffered by Plaintiff is USD49.5 million”, according to documents.

Nearly all of the civil lawsuits around the crash had been settled out of court. In Stumo’s case, however, her family had been unable to reach an agreement with Boeing ahead of the trial, which began on Monday.

“We are deeply sorry to all who lost loved ones on Lion Air Flight 610 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302,” Boeing said in a statement.

“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.”

The jury awarded the family of Samya Stumo USD21 million for the suffering she experienced on the fatal flight, USD16.5 million for the family’s loss of her companionship and USD12 million for the family’s grief, according to a press release from Kline & Specter, which represented Stumo’s estate.

“We are gratified for the opportunity to try the compensatory damages case,” said Kline & Specter attorneys Shanin Specter and Elizabeth Crawford, according to the firm’s press release.

“Next, we will seek appellate reinstatement of the punitive damages claims against the Boeing executives and the component part manufacturers.”

Stumo was killed en route to Kenya for her first assignment with ThinkWell, a public health non-governmental organisation that aimed to increase access to health care in Africa and

Asia.



But the plane went down shortly after taking off from Addis Ababa, killing everyone aboard.

The Ethiopian crash followed a Lion Air crash about four and a half months earlier in Indonesia.

The two crashes claimed 346 lives in total. Boeing acknowledged that anti-stall software was implicated in both accidents.

Specter told the Chicago federal civil court that Boeing was "negligent", the aircraft was "unsafe" and that "Boeing caused this crash and these deaths".

The trial featured testimony from Stumo's relatives, including father Michael Stumo, who said the disaster still haunts the family.

"It feels like since she's been gone, we don't have permission to be happy," Michael Stumo testified. "Sometimes you catch yourself being happy, and you correct yourself, like you shouldn't be."

Speaking ahead of the verdict, the aviation giant's attorney, Dan Webb, expressed the company's sorrow at the crash.

He said that Boeing's "only disagreement" with the Stumo family was "on the exact amount of compensation".

A US judge dropped criminal charges against Boeing in 2025 over the deadly crashes as part of an agreement between the company and prosecutors.

In November, a Chicago jury awarded the widower of one of the MAX victims USD28.45 million. A second trial, in January, was halted when an out-of-court settlement was reached after the second day.

The next trial is scheduled for August 3 and focuses on the death of Michael Ryan of Ireland.

Separately, Boeing is embroiled in a trial in a federal court in Seattle brought by Polish airline LOT, which seeks damages of at least USD250 million for lost income during the 2019-20 MAX grounding after the two deadly crashes.