

## Families seek N1b compensation over alleged police killing of suspected kidnappers

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FAMILIES of two alleged kidnappers, Philip Tomi and Joel Wolomo, said to have been allegedly killed in Lagos State police custody, on Wednesday sought a compensation of N1 billion from the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Umar Manko, and two of his subordinates.

In a suit filed before an Ikeja High Court presided over by Justice Yetunde Idowu, the families are urging the court to direct “investigations and prosecution” of Manko and two others by the “appropriate agencies of government”.

In addition to the N1 billion damages and prosecution of persons culpable in the killing of the suspects, the families want the court to declare that “the deaths of the original applicants by the respondents” were carried out without lawful order of court.

The families also seek a declaration that the suspects, “who were reported dead on December 7, 2012, while in custody of the respondents, had right to life under Section 33(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”.

The families, through their counsel, Mr. Seliwei Baidi, sought these reliefs after the police filed an application opposing a contempt suit earlier filed against Manko.

The police, represented by Mr. Friday Igbinosa, on June 6, 2013, had confirmed the family members’ fear that the suspects might have been killed in custody.

Igbinosa, on the day the court was to deliver ruling on the contempt suit filed against Manko and two others, filed an application giving excuse for their late response to the suit and also declared that the suspects died during investigation.

The police counsel said the suspects confessed to the crime of kidnapping, and were shot by their gang members when policemen escorted them to their hideout for further investigation.

Baidi had, therefore, filed a fresh application seeking the court to substitute the deceased suspects’ names - Mr. Philip Tomi and Mr. Joel Wolomo - with Tomi’s brother, Harvest Tomi. Harvest Tomi, who is now suing on behalf of the “families of late Philip Tomi and Joel Wolomo”, joined along with Manko, Supol Terry (O/C Anti-Robbery Squad Ikeja) and Sergeant Eric Akinmuyisan (the Investigating Police Officer), as the defendants.

Tomi, in an affidavit in support of the fresh application, stated that he believed that the police had extra-judicially murdered the deceased persons.

“The respondents’ explanation that only the deceased persons were hit by bullet is unsatisfactory. I reasonably believe that the deceased persons were extra-judicially murdered by the respondents and their bodies deposited in the Isolo General Hospital Mortuary, Lagos, on December 8, 2012,” he stated.

The hearing on the matter, which was stalled on Wednesday due to the judge's absence, was adjourned till September 26.

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