

# Police fined N15m for killing three protesting Shi'ites

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Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu

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THE Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday awarded N15m damages against the Nigeria Police Force for the killing of three members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, also known as Shi'ites

Justice Taiwo Taiwo, in his judgment, awarded N5m for each of the families of the three deceased persons.

The deceased, Suleiman Shehu, Mahdi Musa and Bilyaminu Abubakar Faska, were allegedly killed by agents of the police near Federal Secretariat in Abuja on July 22, 2019 during a peaceful protest for the demand of the freedom of the IMN leader, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, and his wife.

Brothers of the deceased, Ibrahim Abdullahi, Ahmad Musa, and Yusuf Faska had filed separate fundamental rights enforcement suits with each seeking N100m damages for the violation of their relations' right to life and the order for the release of the bodies from mortuaries where they were allegedly deposited by the police.

Delivering judgment in the suit on Monday, Justice Taiwo held the police liable for the killing of the deceased, as the claims by the plaintiffs' were not controverted by them (police).

The police failed to file any defence despite the evidence of service of the court process on them.

Their lawyer, Mr Simon Lough, only appeared in court on Monday, the day slated for judgment, but the judge refused to grant him audience on the grounds that the appearance was belated.

“Where an averment is uncontroverted, the court shall assume it to be true,” the judge said in his judgment, adding, “averment that is not controverted is deemed to be right.”

Apart from awarding the total N15m damages against the police, the court also ordered the medical directors of National Hospital, Abuja and Asokoro District Hospital, in Asokoro, Abuja, to release the corpses of the deceased to the families.

The judge, however, refused to grant the prayer for an order directing the police to tender public apology to the families of the deceased.

Shortly after the judgment was delivered on Monday, the police lawyer, Lough, informed journalists that the police were not aware of the suits.

The plaintiffs had in their separate suits, joined the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, as the first defendant in all the four cases.

The IGP did not file any defence and was not represented by his lawyer in the cases when the plaintiffs' lawyer, Bala Dakum, adopted his clients' processes on June 24.