


## THE AUSTRALIAN

---

# Lion Air 'heavied' relatives over compensation

---

By **AMANDA HODGE**, SOUTHEAST ASIA CORRESPONDENT

11:00PM NOVEMBER 27, 2018 •  1 COMMENT

US lawyers representing the families of several victims of last month's Lion Air crash, which killed all 189 people on board, have accused the discount airline of trying to coerce relatives into signing away their right to sue in exchange for compensation they are legally entitled to.

The accusation comes as families yesterday received a briefing from National Transportation Safety Committee officials, a day before it is due to hand down a preliminary report into the cause of the country's deadliest air disaster in more than two decades.

Californian lawyer Brian Kabateck, who is representing the families of victims Nurul Dyah Ayu Sitharesmi and Ibnu Hantoro, said Lion Air officials had tried to persuade families to sign away their right to sue at a meeting held a week after flight JT610 crashed into the Java Sea, minutes into its flight from Jakarta to Bangka Belitung province.

During the November 5 meeting at Jakarta's Ibis hotel, a Lion Air insurance official warned families against "accepting the help of strangers", and advised them to sign a release paper because "we cannot disburse the money until you do".

All 189 families of the victims have been promised 1.3 billion rupiah (\$123,531) in compensation from Lion Air, 5 million rupiah to cover the costs of travelling to Jakarta to retrieve bodies and 25m rupiah to cover funeral costs, though only families of the 125 victims identified have received burial money.

"It has come to our attention that there have been attempts to get families who are unrepresented by counsel to sign away their rights to sue parties like Boeing in exchange for insurance payouts that are required by statute," Mr Kabateck said. "The families must get full recovery from all responsible parties."

Sanjiv Singh, another US lawyer representing the two families, said the US legal team was co-ordinating with Indonesian counsel to “protect our clients and the rights of all the victims in this matter”.

Lion Air spokesman Danang Mandala Prihantoro confirmed the November 5 meeting had taken place but said he could not comment on what was said.

But Anton Sahadi, the cousin of victim Muhammad Ravi Andrian, said that Lion Air director Daniel Putut Kuncoro had also told families that while the company would not try to prevent them from pursuing legal cases, it could not pay compensation to them until after a court decision.

Mr Sahadi said his family had also been contacted by US lawyers but had yet to make a decision on whether to join the case.

The lawsuit against Boeing alleges the aircraft manufacturer failed to communicate a new safety feature that hadn't existed in previous 737s, and that its defective flight manual and operating procedures caused the nose of Lion Air's two-month-old Boeing 737 Max to suddenly drop into a steep dive.

Boeing chief executive Dennis Muilenberg has denied the company withheld information about the new system.

Aviation expert Gerry Soejatman said today's preliminary report was likely to repeat information given to the Indonesian parliament last week; that the plane had moved up and down to a height of 5000ft until a “stall condition” was triggered as a result of misleading data coming from one of the angle-of-attack sensors, and the pilot had fought the plane's nose dive to the end.

But a potentially key finding from today's report would be whether the angle-of-attack sensor sent back to the manufacturer just two days before the crash was actually faulty.

“We are predicting that might not have been broken because we suspect that the problem was downstream of that in another computer box, so we are just waiting on confirmation,” Mr Soejatman told *The Australian*.

*Additional reporting: Nivell Rayda*

**AMANDA HODGE, SOUTH EAST ASIA CORRESPONDENT**

Amanda Hodge is The Australian's South East Asia correspondent. Based in Jakarta, she has covered war, refugees, terror attacks, natural disasters and social and political upheaval from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka... [Read more](#)

