



## Court jails 4 foreigners for trafficking animals in Lagos

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The convicts were placed on trial for illegal possession, dealing in, assembling, storing, smuggling, and trading in pangolin scale and elephant ivory.

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A Federal High Court in Lagos, on Wednesday, July 20, 2023, convicted three Vietnamese -Phan Chi, Phan Quan, and Duong Thang, and a Guinean, Mory Berrette, for trafficking wildlife within and outside the shores of Nigeria.

Justice Yelim Bogoro of the federal court, who presided over the case, consequently sentenced the convicts to six years imprisonment. Bogoro convicted them after they pleaded guilty to an amended four-count after they entered a plea bargain agreement with the **Nigerian Customs Service (NCS)**.

The court sentenced each of them to three years imprisonment on the first count or the sum of ₦500,000 each as fine in lieu of imprisonment.

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*“You are sentenced to two years imprisonment on the second count, or in lieu of imprisonment pay the sum of ₦2m each as a fine.*

*“The convicts shall each pay a fine in the sum of ₦2m each for the third count, being first-time offenders.*

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*“The convicts shall each be sentenced to one-year imprisonment on the fourth count or in lieu of imprisonment pay the sum of ₦200,000 each as a fine,” the judge stated as he convicted the foreigners.*

According to the terms of the plea bargain deal, the convicts *“will assist in providing useful information for the arrest of other persons at large who are involved in the wildlife trafficking trade within and outside Nigeria.*

*“The convicts also agreed to stand as witnesses for the prosecution when required to do so, if the absconding suspects involved in the trace of illegal wildlife trafficking within and outside Nigeria are arrested now or at any time in the future.”*

The convicts, who had been standing trial since 2022, alongside two Nigerians, **Babangida Mahmoud** and **Olamilekan Adenekan**, and a Guinean, **Fofou Evariste**, were arraigned by the NCS on July 22, 2022, for illegal possession, dealing in, assembling, storing, smuggling, and trading in pangolin scale and elephant ivory.

**DAMILARE FAMUYIWA**

Damilare Famuyiwa is a journalist and media consultant with over seven years of experience.