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Commotion in Sokoto as tipper crushes woman, 55

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A scream was the last breathe 55-year-old Hajiya Aishatu Umar could summon as a speeding tipper approached her; transfixed to the spot, her reflexes were not quick enough. The vehicle hit her where she stood at an intersection along Arkila Road in Sokoto, the Sokoto State capital on Friday, July 2nd, 2010.

Late Hajiya Aisha sold bean cakes (kosai or akara) in the Arkila area of the metropolis.

The deceased, a mother of 10, was said to have been hard working and full of life before she met her death at about 11 am on that fateful day.

One of her children, Alhaji Muktari says when he got to the scene of the accident; he met a tyre of the vehicle resting on the body of his mother

According to him, his mother was standing at the junction when the tipper driver came and hit her. She had no

Some residents, who claimed to have witnessed the tragic episode, alleged that the tipper driver was on the phone. If the claims are true, the driver probably lost concentration while the vehicle followed its own course. The drivers' union, however, disputed the claims. Some angry residents responded by setting fire to the vehicle.

Apparently, such accidents are not rare among tipper drivers in the area. The residents also noted that tipper drivers had become a nuisance and causing avoidable deaths on account of dangerous driving. They said because of this, at least ten bystanders had lost their lives in the last couple of years.

Tipper drivers often ply the area because they load sand from there

"This is the 10th death we are recording in this area; we want government to take action on the issue," one of residents of Arkila pleaded.

There is some frustration brewing among the residents who feel that the government is not responding to the problem because, they said, the tipper drivers went about their activities with impunity after each fatality. "They went on with their work as if nothing happened. At least as a way of commiserating with the victim's family, they should have even declared work-free day to express grief over the death they caused," one of them

The Secretary of the Tipper Drivers Association, Umaru Mai Ungwa denied that the driver in question was making calls while driving when the incident took place. Instead, he blamed the weather.

According to him, "there was a strong wind on that day and the plastic container belonging to the late Hajiya blew away and she hurriedly crossed the road to pick it, when the accident occurred.

Mai Ungwa said it was practically impossible to stop the over 300-strong tipper drivers from working immediately after the incident.

He, however, said the association has taken steps to ensure that such accidents are minimized or even eliminated. The association would do this by educating its members on the need to ensure their vehicles are in the good condition and road-worthy at all times. He said the association has always exhorted its members to obey all traffic rules and regulations. He pledged that there would be a change for the better soon in tipper drivers' behaviour.

Soon after the accident that Friday however, some youths vented their anger by setting the tipper vehicle with registration number XA 393 GAD ablaze; its driver had escaped.

The police later went to the scene and made some arrests.

Members of the family of the late Hajiya Aisha condemned what they said were indiscriminate arrest by the police, noting that six of deceased's children were among them

The Public Relations Officer, Sokoto State Police Command, ASP Lawal Abdullahi, confirmed that the vehicle was set ablaze before the police arrived on the scene., saying police officers were trying to maintain law and order when "some hoodlums" began throwing stones at the policemen.

He said that those arrested were those allegedly behind the disturbance, and that they would be charged to court for incitement

He said the driver of the vehicle had also been arrested and would be charged with offence under the Road Traffic Act.

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