

# Kaduna's new road brings new crime wave

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The new road, which links Kaduna North to Kaduna South.

Crime seems to be thriving in the area called Kamazo in Kaduna, especially along the new, long stretch of road connecting the North and South parts of the state. The construction of the fourth bridge and the road is about ten kilometres from the popular NNPC junction to Gobarau Road in Ungwan Rimi, and is one of the major road projects embarked upon by the government of late Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa, after whom the road is named.

Residents of Kaduna greeted the conclusion of the road and bridge with applause, as it greatly reduced the daily ordeal caused by heavy traffic along the other bridge - close to the Ahmadu Bello Stadium - which connects the southern part of Kaduna to the north, where a great deal of offices and businesses are located.

The road has since its completion opened up surrounding communities including aforementioned Kamazo, Karji, Ungwar Maigero, Jan Ruwa, and Mahuta as modern houses, event centres, hotels, schools and various businesses are springing up along the road. But developments show the road is fast-becoming the go-to place for criminals who operate very early in the morning or late at night when it is quiet. Majority of people who ply the road during the day avoid the route at night due to fear of being attacked by criminals.

Many cases of murder, kidnapping, car-jacking, bag-snatching, and other crimes have been reported in the past six months. Most recently, a Colonel Samaila Inusa of the Nigerian Army was kidnapped by unknown gunmen along the Kamazo area, close to the NNPC junction. He was found dead a few days later in a village under Kakau district, making residents as apprehensive as ever.

Daily Trust also learnt that one Mr. Jonathan Gada, 47, residing in Kamazo area was gruesomely killed by unknown persons along the new road sometime last year. Narrating her ordeal, the deceased's widow, Mrs. Gloria Jonathan said, "My husband went out around 9:00pm on September 15, 2015 and he never returned. I was telephoned to come and identify the body of a man found dead on the road. I, in company of others, rushed there and found my husband dead, with several cuts all over his body."

The police were alerted and they came to carry his corpse, Mrs. Jonathan said. "Taking care of my young son is very difficult because I don't have any steady source of income," she sobbed. The murder, she said, remains unsolved.

Another resident of Kamazo, Francis Mathias, said he doesn't go out in the evenings because he feels the area is unsafe, even if he believes the crime rate in the area is still low. "I have been living in Kamazo for about a year now. I usually do not go out much and so whenever anything happens, I do not go close. After the colonel was kidnapped and later found dead, the police intensified their search along the road. I was in a tricycle going to my family house at about 7:30pm and when we got to a police checkpoint, we were all asked to come down, and they searched us thoroughly. Nothing incriminating was found on us, but since then, I don't go out that much."

Mathias added that he hasn't witnessed any incident, "But few months back, I heard that a man was killed in an uncompleted building. Frankly, I do not know how true that is. Other times, I hear that some burglars break into peoples' houses on Sunday mornings when everyone has gone to church. Some of the thieves are sometimes caught and beaten up, while other times they escape. The road is a busy one, but in the night it is usually quiet with few cars passing. That is why I do not often go out when it is 7:00pm." He pointed out that the prevailing epileptic power supply or total blackouts for weeks along the road is not good for security, adding that if there are street lights on along the road at night, then crime would not thrive so much in the area.

Also, a businessman who lives in Kamazo, Emmanuel Nwankwo, said he too has only heard of the crimes reported in the area through the media, but has not yet experienced any. According to him, a reason why kidnapping and related crimes may thrive on the road is because it is a free expressway used by government functionaries, top military officers and rich men who prefer it to the major roads.

Ime Akpan is the Vice Chairman of the Association of Tricycle Riders in Karji area, which the road also services. He said there is no presence security personnel on the road since President Muhammadu Buhari ordered the removal of military personnel and checkpoints from roads, which affected that very one too. "There used to be a small army base by the bridge and their checkpoint helped a lot, security-wise," he said. "But now they're gone." Locals, Akpan said, put any visible security arrangement along the road. He noted that the road is usually very busy from 6:00 am to 10:00 am when people are going to work or school and from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm when they are returning. Any other time outside these periods, the road is usually dry, especially from 10:00 pm. He called on government to bring back the military checkpoint on the road by the bridge, as the presence of soldiers on the road will be plus.

Another resident, who simply gave his name as Mr. Benson, said: "Two weeks ago, a friend of mine told me that a neighbour escaped being whisked away by kidnappers in a car along the road. The man, he said, struggled and was eventually brutalised and pushed out of the car by the would-be kidnappers. In the past, when the military checkpoint was mounted on the road, there were no criminal activities." He urged government to check the activities of cars being used for commercial purposes along the road.

However, the Kaduna State Police Command has arrested 15 suspected kidnappers, including those alleged to be responsible for abducting three pastors and, possibly, the colonel who was later found dead. Some of them, according to the Police Commissioner, have confessed to being the ones terrorising commuters on the Kaduna-Abuja expressway. He assured members of the public of police readiness to make Kaduna safe and habitable and urged residents to assist with useful information.

Mrs. Angela Simon, who does business along the road, said she believes the road makes it easy for criminals to do their deeds and speed off without anybody noticing. "Sometime last year, some criminals snatched a car from a woman at gunpoint along the road very early in the morning. Before the woman could shout for help, the thieves had gone," she said. "Attention needs to be given to this road, because of its importance," she added.