

Kogi Tanker Accident: Cleric Loses 6 Children As Bizman, Wife, 3 Kids Die

AHMED TAHIR AJOBE (LOKOJA) & MUIDEEN OLANIYI (ABUJA)



At least 23 people have been confirmed dead and many others injured following a petrol tanker explosion that gutted five other vehicles at the Felele area along the Lokoja-Abuja highway in Kogi State on Wednesday.

While the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) confirmed the death of 23 people, residents of the area said over 50 people lost their lives.

- [8 killed in Kwara tanker accident](#)
- [8 killed, 7 injured in Kogi tanker accident](#)

Two families lost 11 members in the carnage while the whereabouts of some students of Kogi State Polytechnic could not be ascertained, heightening fears that they could be among the victims.

What went wrong

Witnesses said the tanker rammed into five cars, two motorbikes, and three tricycles killing all the occupants and some bystanders.

The place where the accident occurred is said to be a death trap that claimed dozens of lives in the last few years.



Tanker accident in Kogi

“23 corpses recovered”

Speaking on the accident, the Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Kogi State, Idris Fika said at least 23 bodies were recovered from the scene of the accident.

Officials of the FRSC who arrived the scene evacuated the corpses, which were burnt beyond recognition, while locals made frantic efforts to identify the deceased.

There was tension around the area shortly after the incident as students of Kogi State Polytechnic took to the street protesting the frequent road accidents in the area.

A trader who gave her name as Sikirat described the scene of the accident as “gory”.

“The driver of the petrol laden truck lost control after brake failure... The location is a bit sloppy and it appeared the driver was helpless and when it was evident there was nothing he could do, he rammed into five other oncoming vehicles,” she said.

“The truck immediately went in flames and within the twinkle of an eye, the inferno enveloped other vehicles and the people trapped in them were burnt. They were wailing and crying but there was nothing that could be done to help them,” she said.

Another witness who gave his name as John, said, “I was about crossing the road when I noticed the tanker driver signalling to motorists to steer clear, but suddenly it tilted on its side falling on vehicles beside it.

“Immediately the tanker fell, a fire erupted and incinerated all vehicles along its way,” he said.

Not the First Time

Our correspondent reports that the scene of Wednesday’s accident had claimed many lives considering the daily traffic in the area. Most of the vehicles coming to the North from the southern part of Nigeria pass through the location.

On December 26, 2007, 5 people were killed and seven others injured following a ghastly motor accident.

On March 9, 2010, over 70 people lost their lives following a petrol tanker explosion.

On July 25, 2017, no fewer than 25 people lost their lives as a result of an accident in the place. On November 18, 2019, 8 people were killed and 7 others injured, while on January 13, 2020, 2 people lost their lives.



tanker explodes along Abuja-Lokoja road

Cleric loses six children

The family of a popular cleric, Malam Idris Yusuf who lost six members are battling to come to terms with reality.

The scholar who operates evening Arabic School also resides in the Felele community.

His children, Aisha, Aisha Junior, Wasila, Faiza, Ibrahim and Abdul-Mutallib were heading to school in a vehicle when the incident happened and they were all killed.

He was said to have slumped when the news of their demise filtered in.

“The whole family is in mourning following the demise of these wonderful children,” a neighbour said.

“We pray Allah to grant the deceased Jannatul Firdausi and the family the fortitude to beat the loss,” another sympathizer said.

Businessman loses wife, 3 kids

A popular businessman called Samson, wife, three children and a neighbour's son were among the victims of Wednesday's tanker explosion.

Samson had reportedly conducted morning devotion at his family house before setting out, a neighbour said.

At his house located behind 4Season Restaurant in Felele, close to Abuja-Lokoja highway, neighbours sat in a group at the entry mourning the man described as "easy-going".

But Mama Elijah, who lived three houses away from that of the deceased, told Daily Trust that Mr Samson popularly known as Sabere Diowo, left with his family in his SUV not 10 minutes before the accident happened.

She said the tanker rammed into the deceased's vehicle while he was waiting for his side of the road to clear before accessing the highway.

"There was commotion everywhere and when we ran out, there was a heavy explosion and ensuing inferno, which prevented people from accessing the scene," she explained.

She said the victims, the deceased, his wife, Mrs Elizabeth and all the children in the vehicle were burnt without recognition.

She said, for now, only Isaiah, the eldest son of the deceased who is away in school in Oyo State remains in the family.

"The whole family is literally wiped out," she said.

“It is sad that the entire family is almost gone,” she added.

Kogi poly closed

Meanwhile, the State polytechnic, which reportedly lost some of its students in the incident has suspended activities over the development.

The decision to shut down the school was taken by the management, which also set up a committee to ascertain its losses, according to a lecturer who spoke to Daily Trust on condition of anonymity.

He said although there were reports that five students lost their lives in the early morning carnage, the management has not been able to confirm the statistic.

“We have to check the record, take the stock of our students who resumed before the incident to be able to ascertain the fatalities on our side.

“Our people have visited hospitals and health facilities within the state capital because of this,” he said.

Buhari speaks

Commenting on the accident, President Muhammadu Buhari said that the frequent petrol tanker accidents in Kogi State that claim lives and property “is a national scandal caused by our indifference to safety standards.”

President Buhari, in a statement by his spokesman, Garba Shehu said that the death of 23 people as confirmed by FRSC “represents another

disturbing and saddening incident in the litany of tragedies that have befallen our country.”

The president, while reacting to the incident, said: “I am seriously worried about the frequency of these unfortunate and large scale tragedies in the country which cause needless deaths.

“Many accidents are preventable if proper proactive and precautionary measures are put in place or properly observed as routine policies,” he said.

The president regretted that “ours is a country where we move on whenever tragedies occur instead of taking preventive safety measures to forestall future calamities.”

President Buhari called on the county’s transport authorities, traffic and road management agencies as well as law enforcement officials to sit up and enforce safety standards with more seriousness.

He added that “refusal to do the right thing can cause potential tragic problems that harm innocent people.”

He commiserated with Kogi State government and the families of the victims of the tragedy.

Bello asks Fashola to rescue Kogi

Meanwhile, Governor Yahaya Bello has expressed shock and sorrow over the fatal tanker explosion.

A statement issued immediately after the incident by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Onogwu Mohammed said that “Governor

Bello is very sad to learn of the tragic loss of lives, many vehicles, property, and other valuables in the petrol tanker fire while expressing his deepest condolences to the family of those affected by the ugly occurrence.”

He said the incident was sadly the greatest tragedy the state witnessed in recent times, even as he shared the feelings of those who lost their loved ones in the incident.

Bello also urged the students of Kogi State Polytechnic to remain calm and peaceful, stating that he equally shared in their grief over the death of some of their colleagues in the unfortunate fire disaster.

The governor also on Wednesday visited the Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola where he solicited for federal government’s attention to the deplorable condition of federal roads in Kogi.

The governor told the minister that the deplorable state of all federal roads across the state could be attributed to recurrent accidents in the state.

He said the state government had done a lot in maintaining the roads but considering the volume of traffic on the roads, in view of Kogi’s strategic location as gateway state, such repairs and maintenance do not stand the test of time.

He appealed to the minister to expedite action in carrying out reconstruction of roads across the state to curtail the preventable accidents on the road.

Responding, Fashola said he had directed the Federal Road Maintenance Agency to immediately move into action to fix the bad portion of the road at the Felele end of the Okene/Lokoja/Abuja road.

Fashola equally commiserated with the governor, people and government of Kogi State over the accident.