

IN-DEPTH

How incessant road crashes stir apprehension in Bauchi

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Almost on a daily basis, a life is lost in Bauchi State as a result of road crashes particularly during the ember months; increasing the deaths and destruction of properties worth millions of naira along various highways and roads across the state.

Hundreds of people have been killed in various road crashes, a situation that has sparked fears with insinuations and speculations linking the rate of deaths to spiritual attacks, cultism and devil's activities with high suspicions on the safety of thousands of commuters plying the highways.

What triggered the speculations linking the deaths to spiritual attacks were the repeated incidents of deaths from burns like the last Sunday accident when the 18-seater bus collided with a trailer and went up in flames killing 16 passengers beyond recognition.

On November 11, five people were killed and nine other passengers sustained various degrees of injury in a head-on collision of buses at Nabardo town along Bauchi-Jos road where some of the passengers got burnt beyond recognition.

On September 22, 2021, three people died and two others sustained various degrees of injury in a ghastly autocrash that happened beside the Dungulbi burial ground at the outskirts of Bauchi metropolis.

On March 7th, 10 people were killed, 12 others sustained various degrees of injury in another crash at Jama'are road in Azare town.

On January 10th, 2021, 20 passengers perished in a ghastly motor accident involving two commercial vehicles that had a head-on collision and burnt beyond recognition at Tirwun, a suburb of Bauchi metropolis, when a Hummer bus belonging to Borno Express heading to Maiduguri from Jos with 18 passengers collided with a Volkswagen Golf car coming from Misau heading to Bauchi with four passengers on board.

On May 17th, eight people were killed in multiple autocrashes in three separate locations across the state. The first accident which involved 70 traders who were travelling from Darazo town to the Dukkun weekly market in Gombe State occurred along Darazo-Dukkun road and killed six people and many others sustained various degrees of injury.

In the second accident, a nursing mother and one other person also died on the spot when a Toyota Hummer bus belonging to the National Tourism Development Commission (NTDC) had a head-on collision with a Sharon commercial bus conveying 17 passengers to



■ A victim being carried into an ambulance

Gombe at the Dungulbi village along the Bauchi-Gombe road.

The third crash was a collision of a truck and a commercial tricycle popularly known as Keke Napep which occurred along the Bauchi-Toro road which left eight people injured.

The worst hit month was November when 35 people were killed within the 30 days of the month in various crashes; a situation that prompted the Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corp (FRSC) in Bauchi, Yusuf Abdullahi, during a meeting with members of the Special Marshal of the Sector to declare that the devil had taken over the roads in Bauchi.

Abdullahi said, "I am very sorry to say, but the fact is that the devil has taken over our roads in Bauchi State. We really need to stand up and do something to reclaim the roads."

"The situation is so terrible. In

November, it was a case of one death per day because we had not less than 35 deaths from road crashes across the state. This is worrisome and disturbing; something has to be done quickly."

"In the Bauchi-Kano road, we had accidents that claimed over 15 lives involving lone accidents as well as Keke Napep which had a lone accident before an oncoming Sharon ran into it. On the Bauchi-Jos road, we had a few head on collision accidents involving mass transit buses which claimed not less than 15 lives with some of the passengers burnt to ashes."

The commander further disclosed the Darazo-Dukkun-Gombe road as another bad spot particularly the bridge before Dukkun which he said has failed and is now a death trap for motorists plying the road, adding that the command was able to get some empty drums from the

FERMA office which were sandfilled and placed strategically to serve as a caution to the road users.

He lamented that all the efforts of the sector to solicit support from individuals in the state on how to check the accidents has proved abortive.

"We had a stakeholders' meeting on the need for collaboration but it is a pity that no favourable response is forthcoming," he said.

Investigation indicates that bad roads, overspeeding, overloading, wrongful overtaking, use of worn out tyres, reckless driving associated with drug abuses, and fatigue by some drivers were the major causes of road accidents in Bauchi State.

Findings also reveal that another factor aggravating the incessant road crashes recently in the state was the intrusion of commercial tricycle operators popularly known as Keke Napep and motorcycles (Okada riders) plying the highways, leading to loss of many lives and properties.

Last Sunday in one of the incidents which involved a Volkswagen Golf car and a Bajaj Boxer motorcycle, four died out of the 11 people at the spot in Duhuwar Kura village, along Azare-Zaki road.

When contacted over the spate of the crashes, Abdullahi said overspeeding and wrongful overtaking by drivers are the major causes of the road crashes in Bauchi.

He further disclosed that some of the drivers lack prerequisite skills to interpret road traffic signs coupled with some forces not allowing FRSC personnel to enforce traffic regulations, adding that despite the challenges, the corps will not leave any stone unturned regarding enforcement and public enlightenment.

Abdullahi disclosed that the command would carry out a simulation exercise on Tuesday, December 14th, in readiness for the



■ Abdullahi

end of the year Special 'Operation Zero, adding that, "Our collaboration with FERMA will be of great importance in fixing some of the bad segments of the roads and removing obstructions. We have filled major potholes causing accidents in some strategic areas. We have patched Ningi road and we have completed the Bauchi-Tafawa Balewa road. Markets will be removed from major highways using joint tax force, while FRSC operatives will ensure free flow of traffic."

When contacted, the state's Deputy Secretary of Road Transport Employee of Nigeria in Bauchi, Hassan Muhammad Hazo, attributed the incessant road accidents to congestion of vehicles from neighbouring Northeastern states plying Bauchi to Abuja and other southern parts of the country.

Hazo explained that the majority of accidents are caused by impatient drivers who are desperate to make quick money and are being encouraged by impatient passengers insisting on moving at high speed with wrongful overtaking.

He further revealed that another factor is the proliferation of unregistered commercial drivers who have no regulatory body to sanitise their operations.

"We have guidelines and rules that all our members must uphold to carry passengers, and any driver that violates the guidelines will be sanctioned. We have our own internal Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIOs) and monitoring officials who inspect all our members' vehicles to ensure the safety of our passengers," he said.

Corroborating the trend, the state Coordinator of the Special Marshal, Dr Kunle Gbadamosi, said the situation on the Bauchi roads needs special attention to tackle the ugly trend. "We have to join hands to pray and intensify enlightenment and education of the road users on the need to be cautious while using the roads," he said.



■ Accident scene