

# 29 die in Kaduna auto crash, Kano explosion

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**T**wenty nine people were killed yesterday in two major disasters in Kaduna and Kano states.

The first incident claimed 20 passengers who were killed in a road accident on the Kaduna-Abuja Expressway when the bus they were travelling in crashed into a stationary BUA Cement trailer around Sam.

In Kano, at least nine bodies were brought out from under the rubble of a collapsed building in the Sabongari area following a gas explosion.

The building is adjacent to Winners Private School on Aba Road. Some pupils of the school sustained injuries in the disaster.

## The Kaduna tragedy

The Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) in Kaduna State, Hafiz Muhammad, who confirmed the road accident, said they suspected fatigue on the side of the driver because they were coming from a night journey.

He said, "The bus crashed into a BUA Cement trailer and then went into flames. 22 people were on the bus among them 17 male adults, 2 women and a minor."

"They said the trailer was parked when the bus went under it. It was terrible. We always caution bus drivers against night journeys," he said.

Although he admitted that there was no law against night journeys, the FRSC boss said, "It is very risky because most of the accidents recorded along that route are due to night journeys."

## Nine bodies recovered in Kano

In Kano, there was panic in Sabongari as the explosion shook the area and environs to their foundation.

Sabongari is a residential and business area in Fagge Local Government Area of the state, which is majorly populated by non-indigenes.

A volunteer that helped to evacuate those trapped in the building said he counted nine bodies but the police and the state government put the casualty figure at four and five, respectively.

There was also a mystery about the cause of the explosion.



While the police blamed it on a gas cylinder explosion at a welder's shop in front of the school, residents said it was a suicide bomb attack.

A resident said the suicide bomber wanted to gain access into the private school but was denied access and thereafter blew himself up, killing three others.

However, the Commissioner of Police in Kano, Samaila Shuaibu Dikko and the Director of the Department of State Services (DSS) in the state, Alhassan Mohammed, told *Daily Trust* that preliminary report suggested that the explosion came from the welder's shop and was not in any way a bomb blast.

This position was also confirmed by the state government through a statement issued by the Commissioner of Information, Muhammad Garba, who identified the welder as Vincent Ezekwe from Enugu State.

## How explosion occurred

*Daily Trust* gathered that the explosion occurred a few minutes before 10am when activities were just picking up in the city.

Residents, who heard the explosion, said it reverberated across several streets.

Following an earlier report that the school was the target, many parents trooped to schools in the area to pick up their children.

Sources and videos that later went viral revealed that pupils of Winners Private School were affected by the explosion as the window glasses were shattered by the impact of the blast leaving many of them with cuts while

others were covered with dust.

When *Daily Trust* got to the scene, security agencies including those from the Nigerian Army, the police, the DSS, the NSCDC as well as men of the FRSC and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) were already on ground and cordoned off the area to ease rescue operations.

But the huge crowd that turned up made the efforts difficult as an ambulance conveying a victim rescued from the rubble did not have an easy passage. This forced security operatives to fire some gunshots in the air to disperse the crowd. Earlier, some of the youths attacked the soldiers with stones but the situation was brought under control.

*Daily Trust* gathered that while rescue efforts were going on, some hoodlums started breaking into people's shops and houses.

A resident of Fagge, Aminu Mohammed, who participated in the rescue efforts, said the explosion was around 10am.

"Because there was no excavator immediately after the incident, we used hands and some light equipment to bring out the bodies," Fagge said. He confirmed that some chemicals were found in shops that were badly damaged by the explosion and were handed over to security personnel.

## Forensic analysis confirmed it was gas explosion - Police

The Kano State Police Command said its preliminary forensic analysis of the crime scene revealed that it was a gas explosion and several chemical substances were recovered.

The spokesman for the

command, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, in a statement said on receipt of the report of the explosion, the CP led the command's combined teams of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Chemical Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence (EOD-CBRN) and Operation Puff Adder to the scene.

"Scene of the suspected explosion that led to a building collapse was cordoned off and four victims (3 males and 1 female) including a welder, named Mr. Ejike Vincent were removed and rushed to Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital, Kano, where a medical doctor certified them dead," he said.

## Govt calls for calm

In its first statement after the explosion, the state government clarified that the explosion "did not occur in a school."

The commissioner for information said the explosion happened at an animal feed store opposite the school.

Garba called on the people in the state, particularly those living in the area to remain calm.

He assured that government would keep the public abreast of any development and warned people to desist from spreading unsubstantiated news.

In a follow up statement, the commissioner confirmed that five corpses had so far been recovered from the scene, reiterating that it was a gas explosion.

"Items so far recovered after the incident include a welding cylinder, carbide and other welding items," he added.

The spokesman for the

## Osinbajo, Ganduje visit scene of explosion

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, who was in Kano to meet delegates of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) for his presidential ambition, in the company of the state Governor, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, visited the scene of the explosion yesterday.

The VP, who was briefed by a resident of the area and the police commissioner, said "We are here to first find out what has happened and also to commiserate with the residents and families who lost their loved ones and those that were injured. We were told that it was a blast coming from a welder (shop) and the welder and several others, about nine in all lost their lives as a result of this incident. This is very sad and very unfortunate. We pray that God Almighty will console those that have lost their loved ones."

Ganduje said the state would take measures to regulate welding vocation in densely populated areas to avert future occurrence.

Pastor Mike Ajibola whose church was a few metres away said over 50 pupils were rescued with a few sustaining injuries.

## NEMA confirms 9 deaths

In a statement later issued, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) confirmed that nine corpses had been recovered from the scene of the explosion. NEMA's spokesperson, Manzo Ezekiel, said the Director-General, Mustapha Habib, who visited the scene of the explosion, coordinated the rescue operations.

## NNPP wants operators relocated out of school areas

The New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) has urged the Kano State government and other authorities at all levels in Nigeria to relocate and stop further approval to those dealing with combustible and inflammable materials to operate near schools.

The National Publicity Secretary of NNPP, Ambassador Agbo Major, who made the call in a statement yesterday, said the measure was necessary to forestall a recurrence of the tragedy.

"Our hearts bleed over this tragedy that affected a nursery and primary school with traumatised children running for their lives," he said.