

Stop the carnage on our roads

An estimated 25 people were killed and 53 others severely injured on July 1, 2024 when a trailer loaded with people and cows collided with another vehicle and somersaulted around the Dangwauro International Market in Kano State. Another accident occurred again on the same day on the Zaria-road Flyover, Kano, in which no fewer than 74 people were injured. Accidents have become common occurrences on our roads on a daily basis from the North to the South.

Although official figures are not readily available from the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), our in-house daily tally from newspapers reports indicated that more than six hundred and twenty-three (623) deaths and more than seven hundred and fifty-one (751) injuries have been recorded between January and July 1, this year, across the country. These include the death of 19 people and 5 injuries from the accident that occurred in January at Sabon-Wuse, along the Abuja-Kaduna Road, Niger State; 16 others died and 4 injured on Zaria-Kano expressway, also in January; and 12 died at Ngibo village along Katsina-Ala-Zaki-Biam Road in Benue State. Additionally, 10 people died and 48 others got injured along Abuja-Kaduna expressway in the FCT in March; 19 deaths recorded on Oyo-Ogbomoso Road in Oyo State; and 20 died in Orogwe community, Owerri-Onitsha Road in Anambra State. On Friday, June 28, a trailer rammed into a Friday Mosque congregation and killed 14 worshippers in Imawa town in Kura Local Government Area of Kano State. The following day, a truck carrying cows, onions and people overturned in the underground tunnel of the Muhammadu Buhari Road Interchange also in Kano, causing extensive damage to goods worth millions, with one death reported.

But the immediate past FRSC Corps Marshal, Dauda Ali-Biu, who spoke in Abuja during a media briefing to mark the end of the corps' "operation zero tolerance", in January this year, said 5,081 people were killed in road traffic crashes (RTCs) across the country in 2023 as against 6,456 in 2022, representing 21 per cent decrease, figures which we should not be celebrating as it involves human lives.

The primary purpose of establishing the FRSC is, among others, "preventing or minimising accidents on the highway, conducting researches into causes of motor accidents and methods of preventing them, and putting into use the result of such researches."

It would, however, seem as if the FRSC is failing in one of the cardinal purposes of its establishment, that is, preventing accidents on our roads. This is going by the way many articulated vehicles are freely moving with a mixture of humans and animals, which often raises the level of fatalities when accidents occur, just as in the recent incident in Kano.

Daily Trust believes that it is time to put a stop to this ugly scenario of cramping humans and animals in long trucks, and the FRSC should be in the vanguard for this. A new approach should be developed to curb this trend, which has continuously sent many to their early graves.

We are equally calling on the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), as well as other relevant stakeholders in the transportation sector to rein in their members to drive carefully, and also immediately stop mixing of humans and animals inside vehicles, especially the heavy duty trucks.

It is imperative to reiterate that the FRSC and other security agencies need to immediately start cracking down on this unwholesome practice. They should also focus on ensuring that our roads and vehicles are safe to ply, and thus ensuring strict compliance with road safety rules.

The corps used to be much more proactive in accident prevention in the earlier years of its establishment than now, and we dare say that it needs to reinvigorate itself to justify the purpose for which it was created.

Doing so, we believe, can lead to heavy reduction if not total eradication of accidents on our roads, especially those associated with the articulated vehicles carrying a mixture of humans and animals.

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