

# 16 Buried, 150 Still Missing After Niger Boat Mishap



Boat mishap

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**At least 16 persons were buried at Gbajibo Community in Mokwa Local Government Area of Niger State yesterday, following a passenger boat mishap.**

It was gathered that the boat, which had about 300 people on board capsized, just a short distance from the victims' destination.

Except a few passengers, majority of the victims were said to be Fulani men and women from Mundi Community, who were on their way to a Maulud celebration in Gbajibo Community.

The incident, Daily Trust gathered, threw the community into mourning and the event was cancelled.

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While authorities attributed the mishap to overloading, locals said the incident was mysterious, adding that the boat did not come in contact with a tree or tree logs. They wondered how a boat, which according to them was not full to capacity, broke into two from the centre.

Mudasir Abdulmumin, whose seven family members were involved, said four of his sisters were rescued alive while three other members, including a five-year-old boy lost their lives.

He said aside his sisters, the other victims were from the Mundi Community. He further stated that his sisters were returning from Mundi, after attending the naming ceremony of a relative's baby and decided to join the boat conveying the Maulud celebrants.

“Nothing came in contact with the boat. What happened was just mysterious because the boat broke into two from the middle while moving on the water.

“Boat operators told us that the boat that capsised had the capacity to carry 500 people and that it had just 300 people on board.

“We lost three people from my family – Hasiya Usman, Adama Usman and a five-year-old boy, Mubsin, whose mother was rescued alive”, he said.

Abdulumumin said while they were burying 10 corpses that were first recovered, including those of his sisters, more bodies were recovered.

Alhaji Musa Kimbokun, Vice Chairman, Mokwa Local Government Area, told Daily Trust that the plight of the victims was made worse when a bigger boat deployed on rescue operation pushed most of the victims further down the river because it was dark.

“We just left the scene of the incident and the situation is pathetic. As I speak with you, 16 persons have been buried and many others are still in the water. But rescue operations are ongoing.

“This particular mishap happened exactly at the same point where a similar incident occurred last year. That of last year was caused by tree logs, but for this particular one, the boat broke into two and people fell into the water. This might be due to overloading,” he said.

Local sources who spoke with our correspondent on the incident said divers were able to rescue some persons but could not give the number.

### **SEMA confirms mishap**

Daily Trust was told that the mishap happened between Magrib and Ishai prayers. Confirming the incident, the Director General, Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Alhaji Abdullahi Baba Arah, said 16 bodies were recovered, including two women and 14 men.

“NSEMA received the report of a boat mishap that occurred last night, October 1, 2024, around 8.30pm along River Niger, upstream Jebba Dam, at Gbajibo Community in Mokwa LGA. The boat was sailing from Mundi Community with a population of almost 300 passengers comprising mostly women and children for Maulud celebration at Gbajibo.

“NSEMA is directing and monitoring search and rescue operations in collaboration with the state Ministry of Transport, Mokwa Local Government Emergency Committee, brave local divers and other community volunteers”, he said.

Arah said over 150 persons had been rescued alive, adding that search and rescue operation was still on to locate more survivors.

### **Niger notorious for boat accidents**

It would be recalled that in 2023, a similar incident occurred at Gbajibo Community claiming no fewer than 30 people who were traveling to their farms. Last week, the Niger State government said boat mishaps had claimed 182 lives in the state in three years.

The state governor, Mohammed Umaru Bago, represented by his deputy, Yakubu Garba, disclosed this at the 2024 World Maritime Day and distribution of 33 fibre glass boats by the National Hydroelectric Power Producing Areas Development Commission (N-HYPPADEC) in Minna.

Bago said 95 deaths were recorded in 2022 while 68 and 19 lives were lost in 2023 and 2024 respectively. He called for strict enforcement of water transport laws to protect lives on water and properties.