

# Auto Crash: Last Moments Of Kano 22



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**Some of the survivors of Saturday’s auto crash that claimed the lives of 22 Kano State’s contingents returning from the just-concluded National Sports Festival in Abeokuta, Ogun State, yesterday recounted the moments before the accident.**

The crash, which occurred around 12:30pm near the Chiromawa Bridge in Bebeji Local Government Area along the Kano–Kaduna Expressway, involved a Coaster bus belonging to the Kano State Government, marked KN 041 A17.

The team, comprising athletes and officials, including coaches, assistant coaches, a journalist and medical personnel as well as drivers and mechanics, were returning to their home state with six Gold, 13 Silver and 10 Bronze medals.

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The incident happened in Dakatsalle town, about 50km from Kano, as the delegation was approaching the final stretch of their journey home.

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The victims included Abdurrahman Muhammed, driver; Abdul'aziz Auwalu, organising secretary, Judo Association, Kano; Nasiru Adam, driver; Ibrahim Salisu, Public Relations Officer, Kano State Sports Commission; Bashir Bello, food services unit; Imamumalik Umar, team doctor; Bilal Salisu (Jegus Photography); Ashiru Shu'aibu, mechanic; Abdussamad Rabi'u, doctor; Abubakar Isma'il Yakubu, doctor; Bello Muhammed, wrestling organising secretary and Usaini Garba, kick boxer.

Others were Isah Usman Aliyu and Isah Ibrahim, kick boxers; Abdullahi Saleh Trigger, kick boxer coach; Nasiru Abdullahi, organising secretary; Aminu Muhammad, assistant coach; Shehu Saidu, boxing coach; Usman Muhammad, assistant boxing coach; Sani Yusuf, kick boxer; Muhammad Aminu (Alaja), assistant coach and Hamal Dahiru, a staff member of the commission.

The survivors, who spoke to Daily Trust, spoke about what happened before their vehicle veered off the road and tumbled down the bridge.

Aminu Idris Abdullahi, the captain of the kickboxing team, said: "We were just chatting when everything changed. It happened in an instant."

A female athlete, Dorathy Okwuzuluike, remembered gripping the seat tightly before "everything went blank."

"The only thing I could do was to hold the chair very well. I woke up in the hospital," she narrated.

Another survivor, Khatimu Hussaini, said she could not really explain what happened.

She recounted: "We suddenly found ourselves going down under the bridge. I saw a woman about to be crushed by the vehicle, and I quickly pulled her back. I also pulled another person. But at that point, I just lay down and started crying in pain."

The chairman of the Kano Sports Commission, Umar Farouk, explained that the commission had reduced the number of athletes as the games progressed.

"Only this last group remained. They earlier had mechanical issues in Lokoja and later Abuja. On Saturday morning, I spoke with some of them. An hour later, I received the tragic call," he said.

## **Families speak**

Bashir Abubakar, brother of Nazifi Abubakar, one of the injured, stated: "We were told the vehicle crashed off the bridge. We searched hospitals until we found him. He is now recuperating."

Mahmud Umar Yakubu, brother to the late Imamumulik Umar, said, “God took him. He was a good boy, obedient and kind.”

Aisha Salisu Jegus, an elder sister to Bilal Salisu Jegus, described her brother as a very respectful sibling and a confidant.

“The last time I saw him physically was five weeks ago when they started preparations for the trip, but we occasionally spoke on the phone even when they were in Ogun State.

“He was my confidant, a trustworthy and reliable person whom you could always find around when in need.

“We will really miss him, but God loves him more. We shall continue to pray for him because when destiny comes, no one can escape it,” she said.

### **Gov Yusuf declares holiday for mourning, N1m for victims’ families each**

Kano State Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf yesterday declared Monday (today) as a public holiday to sympathise with the victims’ families.

The state government also announced a donation of N1 million and food items to each bereaved family.

The governor’s spokesman, Sanusi Bature Dawakin Tofa, in a statement, said: “On behalf of the government and the good people of Kano State, we wish to extend our heartfelt condolences over the unfortunate incident that occurred to the brave Kano team members on their way back home along the Kano–Zaria expressway.

“It is with a deeply saddened heart that I received the tragic news of the unfortunate incident which claimed the lives of 22 innocent citizens and left several others injured.

“On behalf of the government and the good people of Kano State, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased. We mourn with you and share in your grief,” the governor said.

Yusuf described the tragedy as a dark moment for the entire state and called for calm and unity during the difficult period.

He assured that all necessary efforts were being made to support the victims and their families.

“While His Excellency is away in Saudi Arabia for the 2025 Hajj Operation, he directed that Monday, 2nd June 2025, be declared as a public holiday for the good people of Kano to pray and sympathise with the families of the victims.

“The state also calls on the Imams and all Muslims within and outside Kano to pray for the departed souls and their respective families to bear the loss,” the statement added.

The State Deputy Governor, Aminu Abdussalam Gwarzo, had on Saturday visited Nasarawa Specialist Hospital where the deceased were deposited.

He also visited the survivors at Murtala Muhammed Specialist Hospital.

In a show of solidarity, Ogun State Deputy Governor, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, visited Kano yesterday to deliver condolences from Governor Dapo Abiodun.

“This is not just a loss for Kano, but for Nigeria. The athletes were ambassadors of unity and youth spirit.

“Our prayer is that this never happens again. May Allah grant them Al-Jannah and comfort their loved ones,” she said.

### **Tinubu, Buhari, Akpabio, Barau, govs, Kwankwaso, ACF mourn**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in a statement at the weekend by his spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, condoled with the government and people of Kano State as well as the families and loved ones of those who died in the accident.

“This is a devastating blow to the nation. It casts a shadow over the National Sports Festival, a celebration of unity, talent, and excellence. It has long served as a platform for discovering and nurturing athletes who bring pride to Nigeria on both national and international stages,” he said.

President Tinubu paid tribute to the accident victims, whose dedication and aspirations in their various vocations embodied the resilient Nigerian spirit.

He affirmed that the greatest honour the country could accord them was to take concrete steps to prevent such tragedies in the future and improve safety standards across the nation’s transportation systems.

Former President Muhammadu Buhari, in a statement yesterday by his spokesman, Garba Shehu, condoled with the bereaved families, the government and the people of Kano State, saying the tragic incident had left him shocked and devastated as it did many people in different parts of the world.

“I am deeply pained by the loss of lives due to the road accident in Kano State. The deaths are painful and devastating. Condolences to the families and friends of all those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon,” Buhari said.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio condoled with Governor Abba Yusuf and the families of the deceased.

Akpabio, in a statement by his spokesman, Esemey Eyiboh, described the incident as a “devastating loss” and a sobering reminder of the need to prioritise the safety and welfare of Nigerian youths.

Deputy Senate President Jibrin Barau, in a post on his official Facebook page, also condoled with the families of the deceased athletes, the Kano State Government, the sports community and the entire people of the state.

“Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un. I just received the sad news of the accident involving members of the Kano State contingent returning from the just-concluded National Sports Festival (NSF) in Ogun State.

“May Allah SWT grant all those who lost their lives Jannatul Firdaus and quicken the recovery of the injured. I extend my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives, the Kano State Government, the sports community and the entire people of the state. Allah ya jikan su da rahama,” Barau wrote.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), in a statement weekend by its chairman and governor of Kwara State, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, described the incident as tragic.

Similarly, the Northern States Governors' Forum, in a statement by its chairman and governor of Gombe State, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, described the accident as heart-breaking and deeply painful.

He said the entire northern region was in grief over the loss of the young and promising athletes who had gone to represent their state and showcase their talents on a national stage.

“These young athletes were more than representatives of Kano State; they were shining symbols of hope and promise for our region and the entire nation.

“Their exploits at the sports festival made us proud, and their untimely deaths are a painful reminder of life's fragility,” he stated.

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) also yesterday expressed deep sadness over the death of the 22 athletes.

In a statement issued by its National Publicity Secretary, Professor Tukur Muhammad-Baba, ACF prayed for God to provide succour to the survivors.

While wishing those injured quick recovery, ACF prayed that the tragedy would not be repeated anywhere in the country.

It also prayed that God continued to protect Nigerians from natural and human-induced calamities, noting that as the nation mourns the lives lost, all stakeholders must work together to prevent future tragedies.

A former Kano State governor and national leader of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), Senator Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, in a statement yesterday, described the incident as a profound loss not only to the bereaved families, but to the people of Kano and the nation at large.

Another former governor of the state, Senator Ibrahim Shekarau, prayed the Almighty to grant the deceased eternal rest and their families the fortitude to bear the losses.

The founder of the Association of Nigerian Women in Sports (NAWIS), Prof. Florence Adeyanju, described the loss as a national tragedy, saying, “These young athletes were symbols of promise. We pray for comfort for their families and recovery for the injured.”

The chairman, Nationwide League One (NLO), Silas Agara, stated: “We stand in solidarity with the people of Kano. The loss is irreparable.”

Kano Pillars FC, in a statement, offered prayers and solidarity to the sports commission and affected families.

Also, the Dala Hard Court Tennis Championship Committee described the athletes as “ambassadors of hope.”

**FRSC cites speeding, driver's fatigue**

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), in the preliminary report of its investigation, said the crash involved 32 persons, comprising 31 male adults and one female.

It said speeding and possible driver fatigue were likely the causes of the crash. Its Sector Commander, Corps Commander M. B. Bature, warned against traffic violations and promised intensified patrols and public safety campaigns.

“The safety of lives on the road is a shared responsibility. Drivers must adhere to traffic rules. We must prevent such painful losses in the future,” he said.

### **Sports expert seeks insurance for athletes**

Reacting to the incident yesterday, a prominent basketball promoter, Igoche Mark, called for a compulsory insurance policy for Nigerian athletes.

In his statement, Mark, who is the initiator of the Mark D. Ball Basketball Championship, said the tragedy served as a stark reminder of the risks that athletes face, underscoring the urgent need for measures to safeguard their welfare.

Condoling with the families of the deceased and the injured athletes, he urged the federal government, through the National Sports Commission (NSC), to prioritise the safety and welfare of athletes.

“It is imperative that we make life insurance coverage for athletes a mandatory requirement. Such a policy would provide essential financial protection and peace of mind for athletes and their families in the face of unforeseen circumstances.

“By implementing proactive measures, we can work towards preventing similar tragedies in the future, allowing athletes to concentrate on their training and performance without unnecessary concerns.

“Athletes are the backbone of our sports industry, and it is our collective responsibility to protect and support them,” he added.

Mark expressed the hope that the incident would serve as a catalyst for meaningful change, urging the sports community to emerge stronger and more united in the pursuit of sporting excellence.

### **‘Crash avoidable’**

A Kano-based sports analyst, Nura Garba, in a chat with Daily Trust yesterday, said the accident was avoidable.

“Though it is quite unfortunate this has happened, when all athletes of the National Sports Festival have arrived their respective states safely, but unfortunately this has happened to Kano contingents.

“Already, there are reports that the bus had developed some fault in Lokoja, which could also mean it had been having issues long before this. The state should have got functional vehicles for the athletes.

“Some are also saying that the driver was sleeping on the road. There should have been extra drivers to support him when he was exhausted, especially for such a very long journey from Ogun to Kano.

“The bus was equally overloaded beyond its capacity, looking at the number of casualties recorded on it. Had these issues been taken care of, the accident could have been avoided. It is such a great loss for the sports sector in the state that cannot be easily recovered,” Garba added.

### **‘We’re dealing with failed transportation system in sports sector’**

Abdulgaffar Oladimeji, Executive Director, Sports Without Borders, in an interview with Daily Trust, said: “The bus was donated by the Kano State Government in 2017. It was originally meant for transporting athletes, but over the years, it became a utility vehicle for everything—political campaigns, weddings, and even ferrying delegates to rallies.

“While another bus that left Abeokuta at the same time arrived in Kano by 10pm, this faulty bus had to keep moving overnight. Had it been in good shape, they all would have arrived together. But they were forced to ‘manage’ it through the night,” Oladimeji said.

He called for a thorough investigation into the role of officials who allowed the faulty bus to be used.

“We are dealing with a failed transportation system in the sports sector. Most vehicles are old and not roadworthy. Similar incidents have occurred in other states — athletes from Borno and Taraba have also died or nearly perished under similar conditions.

“In the past, even if a state didn’t have enough vehicles, they rented and properly serviced them before any trip. That culture of responsibility is gone,” he said.