

# 17 Die In Expressway Crashes

By Kayode Ogunbunmi

**ABOUT** 17 commuters yesterday lost their lives in two early-morning acci-

dents along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, allegedly while the driver was trying to evade arrest by officers of the



eyeseiagha during the burial ceremony of Jonathan's

PHOTO: PHILLIP OJISUA

## tion For The eapons

have conceded the office of the Vice President to the region."

On the fate of one of its leaders, Okah, MEND said it was not talking directly with government on the matter. It stated that others are doing the talking on its behalf, including the elders of the region and some international mediators.

"We will not start something we cannot finish. We will not embark on a peace process that is flawed. The first step will be to release Henry Okah as demanded, then involve the international body such as the UN (in the peace process.) Have we all not witnessed the failure of such hasty and uncoordinated agreements before?"

### LAGOS

Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA).

The first accident, which occurred at the old toll gate at about 7 a.m. during the monthly sanitation exercise involved an 18-seater Isuzu commercial bus, with registration number XE 613 FST and a Dangote truck, numbered XX 129 EKY.

Eyewitness reports said the bus was coming from Akute, a suburb of Lagos, with a full load of 18 passengers when the driver noticed that some LASTMA officers were already out to effect compliance with the sanitation rules by arresting defaulters.

All commercial activities, including transportation, is prohibited while exercise, which last from 7am to 10am, is going on.

An eyewitness said the driver, now late, had capitalized on the light traffic occasioned by the exercise to drive against traffic, but met the officials at the old toll gate.

He said immediately the LASTMA officials noticed the driver, they mounted their motorbikes and went after him.

The driver subsequently lost control of the vehicle and rammed into the stationary truck.

It is said that only one passenger escaped unhurt.

After the accident, a

mob descended on the LASTMA men, but these were quickly rescued by officers of the State Security Services (SSS), whose state command was opposite the scene of the accident.

The commandant of the state Rapid Response Squad, Hakeem Odumosu told newsmen that he arrived the scene immediately he got the information. "Several people died while some were rescued and taken to the general hospital for treatment," he said.

The Special Adviser to state governor, Babatunde Fashola on transportation, Kayode Opeifa however told newsmen that only four people died and have since been deposited at the General hospital Isolo.

He said eight passengers were rescued and taken to the state University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) for treatment.

"Our people were attacked by hoodlums while they were trying to rescue the passengers; they even damaged one of LASTMA motorbikes," he said, adding that some valuables were forcefully collected from the LASTMA officials.

Another four people died in another accident involving another commercial bus on Berger Bridge while the driver was also attempting a U-turn to avoid LASTMA officials.