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[Letters](#)
[Cartoons](#)
[Discussions](#)
[Outlook](#)

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[Weekend](#)
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12 Die In Borno Bus Crash

From Njadvara Musa, Maiduguri

TWELVE people were feared dead yesterday after a J5 bus hit a tree and caught fire on the Maiduguri-Bama road. Six passengers were injured in the mishap.

According to witnesses, the bus driver was avoiding a pothole on the highway when he lost control and veered off the road, hitting a tree. The bus immediately caught fire, which burnt 12 passengers beyond recognition while six others sustained fire burns, head and limb injuries.

One of the eyewitnesses said: "We heard a loud bang, after which the bus caught fire. The people were shouting 'help, help!' but we could not because we had no means of rescuing the trapped passengers."

Confirming the accident, Chairman, National Union Roads Transport Workers (NURTW), Mallam Mahmud Dudu Gwoza told The Guardian that 17 passengers boarded the bus at the Bama motor park at about 9.45 a.m.

He said barely an hour after the bus departed, the NURTW office got reports that it was involved in an accident.

The 230-kilometre Maiduguri-Gwoza-Mubi road has been in a deplorable state with lots of potholes. It has not been rehabilitated since 1980 when it was built.

Gwoza said efforts were being made to contact relations of the victims and advised travelers to always endeavour to write their names and addresses on vehicle manifest at motor parks before their journey.

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