
Many feared burnt as fuel tanker explodes

By John Akubo

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Scene of the accident on Lagos-Ibadan expressway

- **Truck drivers protest against alleged killing of member, block Abuja-Lokoja road**

Many were yesterday evening feared charred in a horrifying inferno following an explosion from a fuel tanker.

The tanker driver, who was reportedly driving recklessly, lost control of the wheel and in a bid to regain balance, tumbled on the expressway near Kyakyama Filling Station, few metres from the Ogere tollgate stretch of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway.

According to an eyewitness, the impact of the fall on the tarred road led to a huge explosion, sending balls of fire and plumes of dark smokes into the sky. The eyewitness added that the fire soon spread and caught vehicles packed by the roadside, triggering a stampede and commotion as many scurried to flee the raging fire.

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The inferno also caused a severe traffic gridlock as motorists on the busy expressway made frantic moves to escape the accident scene.

It is not yet certain how many people that were affected by the inferno when the tanker caught fire but the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Agency (TRACE), Babatunde Akinbiyi, said field report suggested that three persons were inside the truck.

Akinbiyi also identified recklessness on the part of the tanker driver as the cause of the accident. “Reckless driving on the part of tanker driver caused the accident, it overturned and caught fire, which also affected the parked white bus. Fire from the fuel-laden tanker affected one white bus parked nearby.

According to eyewitness three people were still inside the tanker when it caught fire. “Our men are still on ground to confirm the actual figure of the victims and our operatives and men of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) are on ground doing the needful. Traffic inbound Ibadan are being diverted to other lanes under close monitoring,” he added.

The FRSC advised motorists to divert to Iperu, old Lagos-Ibadan expressway. The number of fatalities could not be ascertained as at press time.

Meanwhile, truck drivers in Lokoja, Kogi State, on Wednesday blocked Abuja-Lokoja highway, protesting against alleged killing of one of them over non-payment of N5,000 toll.

The situation caused gridlock on the busy highway linking the northern and the southern parts of the country, as many travellers were stranded on both ends of the

Murtala Muhammad Bridge in Lokoja.

A witness told newsmen at Akpanya, near the bridge, that the driver was flagged down around 1:00a.m. on Wednesday, October 18 by revenue collectors from Kogi Agricultural Produce Board.

The eyewitness, who preferred anonymity, said the deceased was on transit from the northern part of the country to the south when the revenue collectors allegedly demanded money from him. He alleged that the late driver told them that he had only N1,500 and could only part with N1,000 and this drew the collectors' ire.

The driver, whose name could not be immediately ascertained, was allegedly hit on the head with clubs following the argument and he collapsed and eventually died.

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In the ensuing milieu that followed the death of the driver, the Abuja-Lokoja road was blocked, resulting in heavy gridlock, which left many travellers from both sides

stranded.

Chairman of the Kogi State chapter of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Tanko Ali, who also confirmed the development, said the truck was coming from Maiduguri and was accosted by the revenue men.

He said the failure of the driver to pay certain dues led to an argument, during which they allegedly descended on him and in the process, he was beaten to death.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, William Aya, confirmed that the tanker driver had issues with the agricultural produce revenue collectors. He also confirmed that the issue led to blockage of the road, but denied any knowledge of death of the driver or anyone else at the scene.