

# Curbing Recurring Articulated Trucks Accidents On Ojuelegba Bridge

By Azeaz Olorunlomu

**T**HE unending mishaps caused by falling trailers, or unlatched containers on articulated trucks in Lagos metropolis, especially on the notorious Ojuelegba bridge, have become a major source of concern to residents of the state.

This year alone, at least three accidents involving these heavy-duty vehicles have occurred on the bridge, inward Carter bridge, leading to the death of some road users. At least four accidents have taken place on that bridge in the last 12 months.

A timeline of crashes on the bridge showed that in the last seven years, several accidents have claimed dozens of lives. For instance, in September 2015, one such incident claimed the lives of three members of the same family. Their relations instituted a N10b compensation suit at the Lagos State High Court. Both the Lagos and federal governments, along with the owners of the truck were listed as defendants in the case.

**1** In 2018, two persons died when a truck loaded with boards and plywood tilted on the bridge and thereafter crashed injuring many.

**2** In 2021, three friends and a cab driver, who were trapped in their vehicle for several hours, survived the ordeal after a fallen tanker fell on the vehicle. It was the first accident, in which all occupants of the vehicle survived.

According to experts, incessant accidents on the bridge are a result of the absence of guard rails, which have been vandalised over the years. A guard rail is a system used on the sides of bridges and sometimes on the median to keep people and vehicles from entering unsafe areas, or falling off the edge.

**3** In the last incident, which happened on Saturday, April 2, a middle-aged man who was driving a Honda Accord car was crushed to death when the truck fell off the bridge and landed on his car.

By the time rescue agents managed to shift the truck off his vehicle, he was brought out of the wreckage, dead.

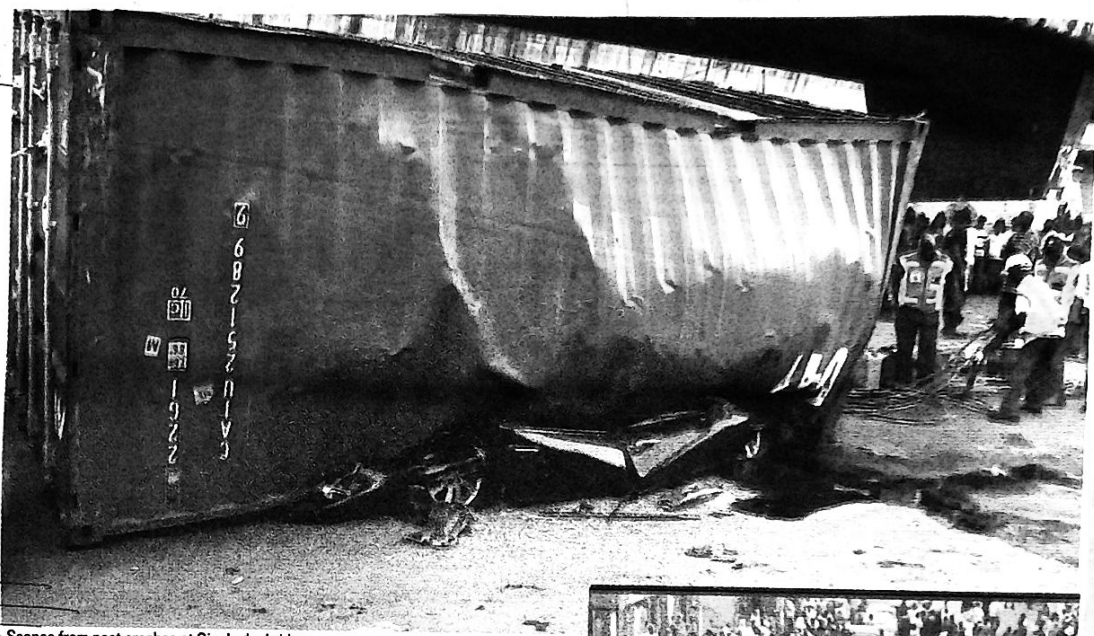
When The Guardian visited the bridge, yesterday, most parts of the aluminum guard rails were gone, having been damaged by previous accidents, or vandalised by scrap metal dealers.

Some residents of the area attributed the frequent accidents to brake failure, indiscriminate parking of vehicles, as well as the abandonment of alternative routes by the truck drivers in preference for the overhead bridge.

Kola Adelana, a resident while commenting on the sad development, said the state government should do all it takes to curb the needless deaths on the Ojuelegba bridge.

For Anthony David, another resident, the state government's attitude towards protecting the lives of residents of the state is simply unfortunate and calls for a change.

According to him, accidents like these cannot be happening week-in, week-out



Scenes from past crashes at Ojuelegba bridge

without the government taking steps to put an end to it.

He, therefore wants the government to restrict articulated trucks and lorries from gaining access to the bridge, and direct them to ply the alternative route to safeguard the lives of other road users.

As a way of curbing similar accidents across the state, the state government had, in 2018, outlawed the movement of containerised trailers and sundry articulated vehicles on the road during the day to curb traffic and fatalities caused by them in the Transportation Law.

In 2021, the government vowed to commence the implementation of the restriction of trucks and long vehicles to night operations on certain routes, but that appeared to have been observed in the breach.

The state Commissioner for Transportation, Dr Frederic Oladeinde, who disclosed at a stakeholders' meeting on the implementation of trucks and long vehicles restriction to night time operations, and dedicated routes in the state said: "The number of trailers that fall on our roads is very alarming. We must protect the people of Lagos State and it is important that we protect their property."

"We have experienced a lot of tankers carrying 90, 000 litres breaking down on the road. Any tanker that carries more than 45, 000 liters will be confiscated. We will also ensure sanctions on defaulters," he said, adding that the restriction was part of the government's efforts to curb consistent road crashes attributed to operations of long vehicles on the road.

"Containerised trailers are not allowed to travel during the day, it has to be at night time between 9 pm and 6 am. They have to abide by this timing in accor-

dance with the Transportation Law, 2018."

One of those that are insisting that the state government should preserve the lives of Lagosians, by enforcing the 2018 Transportation Law is Mrs. Idowu Ademola.

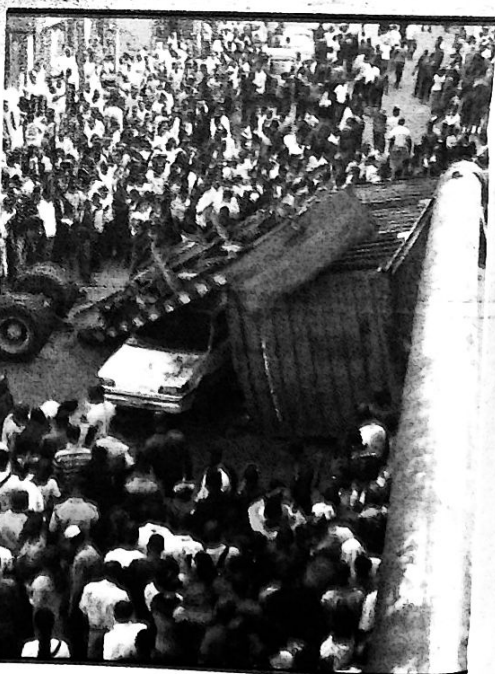
Ademola who deplored the government's failure to find a lasting solution to the incessant truck and trailers accidents on the bridge, also called for adequate sanctions for culprits to serve as a deterrent to others.

She stressed that government needs to take the trucks and trailers restriction seriously while recommending that trucks and trailers should be banned outright from plying the bridge where possible.

"Also the aluminum railing that has been vandalised by hoodlums should be replaced to prevent vehicles from falling off the bridge," she appealed.

Also, a petty trader in Ojuelegba, Mrs. Ebere Onuah, stated that the government needs to enforce the latching of containers borne by articulated trucks to prevent them from falling off.

"Many of these drivers are either too young or too inexperienced to handle and manage trucks on Lagos roads. Of course, inexperience and negligence are some of the major factors that lead to accidents on our roads."



Apart from the Ojuelegba bridge, several bridges, including pedestrian bridges across the state are yearning for attention. Some of them are the Toyota link bridge to the International Airport Road, Gbaji Seme Border bridge, as well as the bridge that links Mushin area to Isolo over the Oshodi-Apapa Expressway.

When reached on efforts by the state government to end the needless bloodshed, both the state Commissioner for Information, Gbenga Omotosho and his counterpart in the Transport Ministry, Fredrick Oladeinde, failed to pick up their calls after several attempts.