

# Atiku, LP, MURIC mourn 60 Niger boat mishap victims

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Ex-VP Atiku Abubakar (Photo by PIUS UTOMI EKPEI / AFP)

## Seek safer waterways

Former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, has mourned the 60 persons killed in the boat mishap that occurred in Borgu Local Council of Niger State.

Director-General of the State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Abdullahi Baba Arah, who confirmed the incident and death toll, had earlier said: “The incident happened on September 2, 2025, at about 11:30 a.m., and the cause was attributed to overloading and collision with a tree stump.

“As at the time of filling this report, 29 dead bodies have been recovered, with 50 persons rescued alive, while two people are still missing.”

In a condolence message posted on his X handle yesterday, Atiku described the accident as “a painful reminder of the urgent need to strengthen safety in (on) our waterways.

“Reports indicate that the boat, which was carrying about 90 passengers, including women and children, collided with a tree stump, with overloading cited as a possible cause of the mishap. This unfortunate incident highlights the recurring risks associated with water transportation in our riverine communities.”

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party said boat travel had become an indispensable means of transportation for many Nigerians, particularly in riverine states, but warned that the lack of infrastructure and enforcement of safety standards has continued to put lives at risk.

ALSO, the Labour Party (LP) has demanded urgent reforms to the country’s waterways transportation, describing the Niger tragedy as “a preventable national shame.”

In a statement yesterday, Interim National Chairman of the party, Senator Nenadi Usman, lamented the Kainji River mishap, where a boat carrying about 90 passengers capsized on Tuesday near Gausawa community in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State.

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She said the disaster highlights the urgent need for robust legislation and stricter regulatory enforcement to stop the recurrent loss of lives on Nigeria’s inland waterways.

“The frequency of these mishaps — particularly in Niger State — is deeply troubling. It is unacceptable that in 2025, Nigerians still die avoidable deaths due to poor regulation, unsafe practices, and government inaction,” she said.

She warned that unless decisive steps are taken, similar tragedies will continue to claim lives, stating: “Those who left their homes to sympathise with others became victims of calamity themselves. We cannot continue to normalise this cycle of sorrow. Nigeria needs a stronger legal and regulatory framework to protect its citizens.”

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CORROBORATING others, the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) has called on governments at all levels to urgently take responsibility for the rising spate of boat accidents in the country.

In a statement yesterday by its founder and Executive Director, Prof. Ishaq Akintola, the group described the situation as both alarming and heartbreaking, noting that while insecurity already makes life unsafe for many Nigerians, the poor state of transportation infrastructure, particularly on waterways, is worsening the crisis.

“Life is becoming cheaper and cheaper in Nigeria. Those who are not killed by terrorists, bandits and armed robbers now die on a regular basis in boat accidents,” Akintola said.

MURIC stressed that the Gausawa incident was not an isolated case, but part of a series of disasters that had turned Nigerian waterways into death traps.

The organisation recalled that on August 17 this year, a boat carrying more than 50 passengers to Goronyo Market in Sokoto State capsized, leading to the death of 40 people. Barely a month earlier, July 26, at least 25 persons, including 10 members of the same family, drowned in another boat accident in Shiroro Local Council of Niger State.

BUT the Niger State Governor, Mohammed Umaru Bago, has regretted the rising boat mishaps.

In a statement by his media aide, Bologi Ibrahim, the governor said many of the accidents happen because of human negligence.

He noted that some of these accidents were caused by overloading and refusal to wear life jackets.

Bagi stressed that such incidents could be reduced if passengers and operators follow safety rules.

The statement added that the governor extended his condolences to families, who lost loved ones in the recent Borgu accident, and prayed for the quick recovery of the injured.

He said the state government shares in their grief and stands with them in this difficult time.