

60 victims of Kaduna explosion buried in mass grave

AT least 60 unidentified victims of the petroleum products tanker explosion in Katugal, Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State have been buried in a mass grave in Katugal.

The Police have begun an investigation into the incident, which occurred on Tuesday when residents were scooping petrol spilt from a 33,000-capacity tanker which fell by the roadside.

The tanker was coming into Kaduna State from Suleija.

The Nation gathered that no fewer than 110 persons were burnt when a spark from a yet unidentified source triggered an inferno in the petrol-choked atmosphere, turning the fuel

**From Godwin Isenyo,
Kaduna**

scoopers into balls of fire.

Of the over 110, about 30 are said to be secondary school students. 15 motorcycles were burnt too.

Health officials in the area said they had to bury the victims in a mass grave as leaving the burnt bodies on the ground can lead to the outbreak of an epidemic.

Our correspondent gathered that more of the victims who were receiving treatment in nearby hospitals at Kafanchan, Jos as well as Kagarko are feared dead.

In Kagarko, some relations of the victims were seen crying at the Kagarko Hospital, an indication that their loved ones had gone.

Early callers at the scene of the incident were the Deputy

Governor of Kaduna State, Mr. Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa and the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Ernest Ebhaze.

Yakowa described the incident as a great loss, not only to the state but to the nation.

The Secretary to Kaduna State Government (SSG), Mr. Felix Hassan Hyet who was at the scene of the accident, said the state government has taken responsibility of footing the bill as well as carrying out the burial of the dead.

"This unfortunate accident could have been prevented if our people would not fish in troubled water," he said.

Speaking to *The Nation* in his office, Police spokesman, Yahaya Sa'ad, a Deputy Su-

perintendent (DSP) described the incident as simply "unfortunate."

He disclosed that the Command has commenced investigation to unravel the circumstances surrounding it.

He said: "It's quite unfortunate what we saw at the scene of the accident. Our records show that 70 persons were killed. One person survived at the Kagarko General Hospital.

"As I said, the police have commenced investigation to establish what happened. By our preliminary investigation, we learnt that a tanker-33,000 capacity fell on the side of the main road.

"The tanker is believed to have been coming from Suleja because that is where a petrol depot is. The 33,000-

litre fuel tanker was meant for the people of the Southern Kaduna area.

"Those who could identify their dead were allowed to take them away for proper burial. Some of the relations came to identify the corpses. However, those corpses that could not be identified were given mass burial. It's unfortunate."

While reacting to the incident, district head of Katugal, Mallam Ishaku Gado, said he was at home resting on the fateful day, when he heard about the accident.

He lamented that an entire generation of youths of the village was gone in the inferno.

"When I came out, I saw a black thick smoke from the direction of the acci-

dent. So, I moved towards it but met some people who were rescuing the victims; we quickly took those rescued to the hospital at Kwoi and Kafancha."

Another community leader, Mallam Sarki Jagaba, who spoke on the incident attributed the cause to high level of poverty in the land.

Amidst sobs, Jagaba condemned the act, saying: "The dead were said to be scooping petrol from the scene of the accident before they were engulfed in the fire. And just two hours after the accident, the tanker went up in flames and all those around the area did not escape. They were all burnt, leaving behind their jerrycans and buckets."