

•File photo of the participants at the rally



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## Abuja peace rally: Returning PDP woman leader, others in fatal auto crash

• **Obanikoro, other party chieftains lament**

UNKNOWN to many, the peace rally held by the First Lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, at the Eagle Square, Abuja, penultimate Thursday ended on a tragic note. A woman leader of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos State, Princess Abigail Adisa, who was part of the contingent from the state to the rally, died in a motor accident on her way back to Lagos after the rally. Five other PDP supporters, who were travelling with her, were also critically injured.

The 56-year-old woman, who until the tragic incident, was the Coordinator of Women for Change and Development Initiative (WCDI) in Ifako/Ijaiye Local Government Area, Lagos State, according

■ **Kunle AKINRINADE** ■

to sources, had travelled to Abuja in her Toyota Sienna car. She was said to have taken active part in the mobilisation of women from the Lagos and South West zone for the event, tagged “Nigerian Women Rally for Peace and Empowerment.” She was also said to have played a prominent role in the organisation of the rally, staged under the auspices of WCDI.

The late Mrs. Adisa was said to have left Abuja in the early hours of Friday, August 16 with five others in her car. A truck whose driver had lost control reportedly ran into her vehicle at a spot close to some roadside fish sellers on the

outskirts of the capital city. She was said to have died immediately, while the other occupants of the vehicle suffered high degrees of injuries and were rushed to the Gwagwalada General Hospital before they were transferred to a private hospital run by expatriates in Abuja.

Among those injured were: Mrs. Ifeoma Chima (Ward F, Ifako/Ijaiye); Mrs. Bisi Olorunda (Oshodi/Isolo); two others simply identified as Mrs. Jimoh (Ward E Ifako/Ijaiye) and Akin, and one other unidentified person.

A source, who spoke in confidence, explained that the deceased had planned to leave Abuja around 10 am penultimate Friday because a friend of hers was scheduled to travel with her. But she later





• The First Lady acknowledging cheers at the rally

**“My mother, my friend and my counselor. I feel like I have lost a better part of me. You never told me that you would not come back to eat your favourite meal...you stood for the truth and no one goes hungry in your house...I will miss you and your words of advice...”**

still in critical conditions.”

The remains of Princess Adisa, described as a committed Christian, were buried on Tuesday at her Iju-Ishaga, Lagos residence amidst tears. The PDP chieftains at the event included former Nigerian High Commissioner to Ghana, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro; a former member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Onimole; Chairman of the PDP in Lagos State, Mr. Tunji Shelle and Mr. Femi Carrena, among others.

She was buried after a short service of songs conducted by some clerics of the Winners Chapel, Ota, Ogun State. There was an outpouring of emotions at the ceremony as many of the sympathisers described the deceased as a committed party member and mobiliser.

In his condolence message, Obanikoro wrote: “You are a very caring person. You made positive impact on the people you met and related with. You will be greatly missed.”

Hon. Onimole described the deceased as “a mother, sister and, above all, a sincere friend. She was always there to give meaningful advice when needed. Politicians in this part of the world can be categorised into the good, the bad and the ugly, but she belonged to the good. She left in the course of promoting women empowerment but never returned home.

“Alas, God knows best. I will always miss her on the side of the truth. But she (has) joined the saints, triumphant.”

In her own tribute, one of the children of the deceased, Ronke, said: “My mother, my friend and my counsellor. I feel like I have lost a better part of me. You never told me that you would not come back to eat your favourite meal...you stood for the truth and no one goes hungry in your house...I will miss you and your words of advice.”

The South-West Zonal Coordinator of Women for Change and Development Initiative (WCDI), said: “Mrs. Adisa was my Lagos West Senatorial District Liaison Officer for WCDI. She was an ami-



• The late Mrs Adisa

able and dynamic woman. She was so zealous about her assignment that at all cost, she made a wonderful and commendable appearance at the famous rally by the women of Nigeria in honour of Mr. President (Jonathan). I will find it difficult to find someone... to replace her. May her wonderful loving soul rest in peace.”

Her husband was also said to have

died in an auto accident on the Atan-Idiroko Road in Ogun State a few years ago, and she had struggled to raise her children before she retired as a school teacher in 2011.

On July 27, we published the story of some female PDP members in Lagos who accused the party of abandoning them after a fatal accident in which one of them died and another had to be amputated while they were going for Jonathan's campaign rally in Abuja in 2011. A highly placed source, who craved anonymity, on Wednesday condemned the frequent mobilisation of women from Lagos to Abuja for such rallies.

He said: “It is so sad that PDP members have once again been subjected to another loss of one of its loyal members in Lagos. I think the party should have mobilised members from the nearest geo-political zone to the unfortunate rally, considering the terrible condition of the Lokoja-Abuja Road lately. It is a suggestion we have been offering the party leadership for some time but they have turned a deaf ear.”

“The N10, 000 offered members to participate in Abuja political parties may have tempted those who attended, but it would not be enough to take care of their families when the unexpected happens.”

Born in 1957 to the royal family of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, the deceased woman received elementary education at the Ansar Ud-Deen Primary School, Ado-Ekiti and attended St. Georges Modern School, Iyin-Ekiti from where she graduated in 1973. She later proceeded to the Divisional Teachers College, Oye-Ekiti and obtained the Teachers Grade 11 certificate in 1980. She also earned the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in 1983 and was until her death, an undergraduate of the National Open University. She taught in several schools in Oyo and Ogun states and once served as the General Secretary of the Nigeria Teachers Union, Ogun State Chapter.

The death of Princess Adisa is coming on the heels of a similar accident involving some members of the PDP in Lagos State who were on their way to President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign rally in Abuja in 2011. The said accident involved 50 members of the party and resulted in the death of a member of the contingent,

while others suffered permanent disabilities and injuries.

The victims were initially promised monetary compensation and free treatment, but that has yet to see the light of day. The controversial peace rally by Mrs. Jonathan had generated serious criticism after the gridlock it generated in the nation's capital.

changed her mind and decided to start her journey back to Lagos as early as 6 am, telling her friend on the phone that she would no longer be able to wait for her.

The source said: “She was full of life throughout the rally and was in the forefront of ensuring that many of the Lagos delegates received adequate care. She had initially planned to leave Abuja by 10 am in order to pick one of her colleagues who wanted to ride with her. She, however, changed her mind and instead left early.

“A few minutes after she left, her friend called her on the telephone to warn her of the danger of leaving so early because of the deplorable condition of the roads on the outskirts of Abuja. But the deceased told her friend that she could no longer abort the trip. Not long after that, the news of her death was broken to us. A trailer was said to have run into her vehicle on the outskirts of Abuja and she died on the spot.”

Another source, however, said the accident actually occurred on the popular Airport Road while the driver of the vehicle was trying to avoid potholes.

“The fatal accident occurred at a junction on the Airport Road when the driver of the car they were travelling in was trying to avoid potholes and collided with a trailer. Mrs. Adisa died on the spot, while the other occupants of the vehicle sustained serious injuries. Some of the badly injured survivors have since been discharged from hospital, while others are