

Rivers fire: Expectant mother, infants among many victims

By Mike Odiegwu On Apr 12, 2022



- Rescuers at the jetty searching for victims

By Mike Odiegwu and Rosemary Nwisi, Port Harcourt

An expectant mother and some infants were among those who died in a fire that broke out at the Bonny-Bille-Nembe jetty in Port Harcourt, Rivers State yesterday.

Eyewitnesses said some were drowned while others were still missing after the inferno that destroyed the busy jetty.

The fire, which reportedly started at 2am, razed over 60 wooden boats and speedboats with most of the victims burnt beyond recognition.

An eyewitness, who spoke in confidence, said the tragedy occurred when some persons were trying to discharge illegally-refined petroleum products, popularly called 'kpofire'.

The source said: "They have warned these people not to be carrying diesel and petrol on boats. Now see what has happened.



“I am sure that many people died, even a pregnant woman and a baby. Around 2am I and my friend came out after we heard a large sound like explosion. Some people were sleeping”.

Another source, who identified herself as Princess, insisted that many of the victims could not be accounted for.

She said: “Many people died because we have not seen some women. About 30 people may have died. But they have seen two children. For the boats that got burnt, we can’t even count them”.

A woman, who escaped with her two children but lost her five-month-old, narrated her ordeal.

She said: “We were surprised when we saw a large fire and people started running. I started calling the manager to help me rescue this child I am carrying. He didn’t answer me, so I carried one of them and jumped inside the river.

“Then, one Hausa man threw a rope and asked me to hold the rope. That was how I came out. So they asked me if there were other children on the boat. I told them yes.

“So they entered the river and brought my other child. But I told them that my smallest child was still inside. But they didn’t see that one”.