

# Six die in Rivers petrol tanker fire

By Mike Odiegwu, Port Harcourt    On Aug 15, 2022



Fire from two petrol tankers killed six persons yesterday in Eteo, Eleme Local Government Area of **Rivers State**.

Some security operatives were also said to have died in the blaze.

It was gathered that the victims were killed while trying to scoop fuel from an a burning tanker.

It was learnt that the tankers each laden with 33,000 litres of diesel suspected to be illegally refined, were set ablaze by operatives of the anti-bunkering unit of the police.

It was gathered that the fire raged from Saturday to Sunday close to the Trailer Park Junction, along the Eteo axis of the East West Road.

A source, Nwigbator Gideon, who is a member of One Million Youth Volunteers Network of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters in the Niger Delta, said the security operatives forced the drivers at gunpoint into the bush with their tankers and set the trucks ablaze.

He said: "I saw many residents scooping and transporting fuel away. As the fire was set on the tankers and they started burning, they exploded and the products poured out and they could scoop it at a distance."

Speaking on the development, the Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC) said there should be a provision in the Petroleum Industry Act, where security operatives who set ablaze petrol tankers and vessels could be dragged to court.

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Executive Director of YEAC, Mr Fyनेface Dumnamene Fyनेface, said that security agents should be dragged to court under the PIA, since host community people, who caused pollution could forfeit their three percent as stipulated in the Act.

Fyनेface lamented that setting ablaze oil tankers and stolen petroleum products would only further damage the already degraded Niger Delta environment.

He said: “The burning of two tankers of 33,000 litres each has caused the spilling of 66,000 litres of AGO into the environment. So, if the PIA says communities will be criminalized and penalized with even the withholding of their percentage, then we can see how to push this advocacy for security operatives that set ablaze tankers and vessels to also be dragged to court under this Act.

“The number one reason for confiscating and impounding the tankers is because they’re allegedly carrying illegal petroleum products. The reason for setting it ablaze is a combination of the fact that it is carrying illegal petroleum products and they also refused to settle them with something substantial, thus wasting their time.

YEAC founder said about six persons including security agents were feared killed and others hospitalized on Sunday

“Incomplete combustion of the tankers occurred yesterday with the tanker still standing and partially burnt. As such, many community people who have been having a filled day scooping products since the incident occurred were at the scene today for more scooping of products.

“As a result of the increased product scooping activity, with some of the scoopers climbing the tankers that were still standing with some product in them, led to an explosion in the process, leading to the alleged deaths, burns and injuries to those caught in the fire including a dead body said to be in security uniform.

Fyनेface further called on the police and other relevant authorities to visit the site of the incident and stop residents of the area from going to the site to scoop petroleum products.

He said: “Fire Service should also be drafted to the scene to ensure that all remnants of fire is put out and the debris of the tankers safely evacuated and the area cleaned up to restore the environment that has been damaged by the police operatives who carried out this environmental crime against the people in the process of stopping another organized crime in the wrong way, as it is their usual practice in the Niger Delta.”

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Rivers State, SP Grace Koko, said she was yet to be briefed.