

20 burnt to death in Bayelsa boat explosion



No fewer than 20 persons were burnt to death yesterday when the engine of a wooden market boat, popularly known as ‘Denghe market boat’, exploded in the middle of the river and sank at Ezetu I community river in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of **Bayelsa State**.

Police spokesman in the state, ASP Musa Muhammed, said: “The local boat travelling from Ekeni community in Southern Ijaw to Yenagoa had a mishap and sank. About 20 persons were reported to have lost their lives. Efforts are ongoing to recover their bodies.”

According to a source, the incident occurred around 5pm on Wednesday when a local boat carrying passengers and market women had a fire outbreak on their way back from the community.

It was learnt that the market boat usually went from community to community along the coastal areas to hold makeshift markets before returning to Yenagoa, the state capital.

Chairman, Maritime Workers Union in Bayelsa State, Mr Ipgansi Ogoniba, said the boat caught fire in the middle of the river while it was sailing to Okubie community and burnt some of the passengers onboard.

He said though the number of casualties could not be ascertained because search was still ongoing, the rescue team was able to recover one body late in the evening on Wednesday.

He said: "The boat left Ezetu 1 community around 3pm for Okubie; the onboard engine they were using caught fire and exploded. The boat got burnt and sank. Some of the people onboard got drowned.

Related News

- Protesters, community youths clash in Bayelsa
- Success-driven Bayelsa begins early preparations for National Sports Festival
- Robbers kill businessman in Bayelsa

“There was no telephone network at that point to reach the rescue team from Yenagoa, because that wooden boat always takes about 18 hours to reach Yenagoa from that point, while a speedboat takes like five hours.”

Read Also: [Tinubu's aides to engage citizens across geopolitical zones](#)

Chairperson, Association of Coastal and Waterways Communities of Nigeria in Bayelsa State, Comrade Odede Dinikpete Tina, ascribed the larger number of casualties to the inability of the boat operators to stick to safety protocols, especially wearing of life jackets while onboard.

She pleaded with the state government to intensify effort in linking more coastal communities by road to curb incessant loss of lives in the river.

She added that despite several sensitisation the association had carried out on safety, people travelling on waterways still refuse to wear life jackets.

Also, Chairman, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Target Isaiah Segibo, warned operators of marine transport to optimise safety by providing life jackets to passengers and ensure that their vessels are in good condition.

Segibo called on the maritime union officers and men of the Marine Police and Nigerian Navy to check the particulars of boat operators to confirm their compliance with maritime safety rules to forestall further occurrence of boat accidents.