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Lagos: Pandemonium as truck kills pupil, crushes two

NOVEMBER 19, 2013 BY ENIOLA AKINKUOTU

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Scene of the tragedy

| credits: *Eniola Akinkuotu*

Activities on the Lekki-Epe Expressway, Lagos State, were halted on Monday after a truck crushed three pupils of a primary school in the Ikota end of the expressway.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the children, who are between the ages of five and 11, were waiting at the median to cross to the other side of the expressway when they were knocked down by the truck.

It was learnt that one of the pupils was killed on the spot, while the two others were rushed to Family Care Ikota Medical Centre.

An eyewitness, Michael Ekundayo, told *PUNCH Metro* that after knocking down the pupils, the truck driver fled.

He said, "Around 8am, three female pupils between the ages of five and 11 were crossing the road. They had crossed a portion of the road and stood at the centre (the median). They wanted to cross to the other side of the road and a Toyota Prado Sports Utility Vehicle with number plate, CB90AKD, waited for them to cross.

"At that time, a blue truck marked, XZ87JJJ, which was on top speed, ran into the Toyota and hit the children. The truck driver immediately fled. We were able to take the three children to the hospital but the youngest one died."

PUNCH Metro learnt that some youths in the area subsequently used tyres and other objects to block the expressway in protest, causing a gridlock for hours.

The youths said they had been pleading with the government to build a pedestrian bridge for over a year to no avail.

A vulcaniser in the area, Soji Olanipkeun, said, "The state government collects toll on this road and yet the governor has not deemed it fit to construct a pedestrian bridge at Ikota Bus Stop which is beside Ikota Primary School.

"The road is very wide and even adults have difficulty crossing the road let alone little children. I think this government does not care about the future of our children."

Another youth, who pleaded anonymity, said the protest would continue until Governor Babatunde Fashola came to address them.

"The government is constructing a pedestrian bridge by Victoria Garden City because it is rich people that live there. Those rich people don't use the bridge. They drive expensive cars and their children don't cross the expressway," he said.

Some minutes later, the Divisional Police Officer, Ajah Division, in company with the Divisional Traffic Officer, stormed the area and asked the protesters to leave the expressway to allow for free flow of traffic. The protesters were, however, adamant.

The policemen started shooting tear gas canisters and guns into the air to scare the protesters. In the ensuing pandemonium, one of the protesters was shot.

Our correspondent, who visited the hospital, learnt that some of the protesters wanted to collect the corpse of the dead pupil.

A doctor, who craved anonymity said, "Three kids were brought here but one died on arrival. The other two were semi-conscious, so the protesters thought they were dead. The girls were rushed to the theatre and we were able to save their lives.

"The older one, Rebecca Ofoegbu, sustained a fracture while the other one had lacerations to the head and legs, but she was also stabilised. The protesters attempted to vandalise the hospital because they wanted to use the bodies to block the road.

"One of our employees was assaulted, but the police intervened and arrested two people. Also, the protester that was shot was also treated here and discharged almost immediately."

The doctor lamented that accident victims were brought to the hospital almost on a daily basis.

PUNCH Metro learnt that parents rushed to the school to take their children home immediately after the accident.

Police Public Relations Officer, Ngozi Braide, said the pupils were responding to treatment, adding that the Area J Commander was able to convince the protesters to leave the expressway.

She said, "Ajah Police Division received a distress call that there was a fatal motor accident. The DPO in company with the DTO went to the scene.

"It was was an accident involving one blue Mercedes Benz water tanker and a black Toyota Prado SUV.

"Preliminary enquiry conducted showed that while the Prado gave way for the pupils to cross the road, the water tanker ran into the kids, killing one of them instantly, while two were injured and are currently receiving treatment at a hospital.

"Based on the foregoing, the residents got angry and blocked the Lekki-Ajah Expressway. They attributed their grievance to the incessant accidents and lack of pedestrian bridge which they had been asking for. The situation was later brought under control as the Area Commander appealed and they left the road at 1.30pm. Meanwhile the area is calm and quiet now."