

30 die as speeding trailer tumbles down expressway

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Scene of the accident Photo: Tunde Odesola

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No fewer than 30 male passengers died in the Adeosun area of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on Sunday after a trailer conveying them tumbled down the road.

Over 50 other people sustained varying degrees of injuries in the crash, while two rams were killed.

The accident occurred on the portion of the expressway which had been recently reconstructed.

Our correspondents counted 25 corpses at the scene of the accident. Eyewitnesses said about five corpses had been taken to a mortuary.

Other victims of the accident, which occurred around 7am, were not removed until past 9am.

A victim, who lost two relatives, covered the faces of the deceased with clothes and broke down in tears.

Shouting the name of Allah as he wailed, the victim identified simply as Mohammed, refused all entreaties as he knelt down between the two corpses and wept bitterly.

One of the survivors of the accident, who gave his name as Mohammed Seripino, said the trailer was coming from Kaduna and had travelled all night.

He said each passenger paid N1,000 as transport fare, adding that the journey from Kaduna was smooth before the accident occurred.

“We are all Hausa. We were coming from Kaduna. Each passenger paid N1,000. This (accident) is not good,” he said.

An eyewitness, who gave his name as Yinka Dada, said he was seeing off his son, who was on his way to Lagos, when the accident occurred.

He said, “I saw everything. I was by the roadside when the accident occurred. I was with my son who was going to Lagos when I saw two vehicles speeding as if they were competing in a race.

“The other vehicle was able to control the wheel, while the driver of the trailer lost control, tumbled down the expressway, and spilled out the passengers one after another.”

Officials of the Federal Road Safety Corps at the Ibadan Tollgate Unit, who came for rescue operation, refused to talk to our correspondents.

“We cannot talk to you now. I am not the boss here. I have bosses who can talk to you later if you come to our unit at the tollgate. You can see we are busy now,” an official told one of our correspondents.

A police patrol van with two officials also visited the scene.

One of the policemen in the van told those with minor injuries to help those with critical injuries into the police van.

However, some sympathisers said the responses of both the police and the officials of the FRSC were poor, and began to rain curses on Nigeria’s political class.

An Electrical Engineering student of the Abdul Gusau Polytechnic, Zamfara, who did not disclose his name, said government should be blamed for the poor response to the plight of the victims.

The student said, “Our leaders have embezzled all the money that should be used to put infrastructure in place. This is why people are dying like rats.”

A middle-aged man, Onyekachi Otuonye, lamented rescuers’ response time to the accident.

Otuonye said, “This is deplorable. Even slaves should not be treated like this. Human lives should be treated with respect and dignity.”

A man in a cleric robe, who attributed the accident to witches and wizards, was shouted down by some sympathisers.

When the man brought out a book of his predictions on the accident that would occur on the road in 2016, sympathisers warned him to stop, saying there were no witches on the road.

One of the sympathisers, Biliaminu Awodele, who confronted the cleric, said, “Accidents happen all over the world, nobody *dey blame witches and wizards, abeg, carry your yeye prediction commot here!*”

However, the FRSC said 17 people died in the accident, while 79 others were injured.

The Oyo State Sector Commander, FRSC, Yusuf Salami, said the accident involved an articulated vehicle and a Peugeot J5 vehicle.

He explained that both vehicles were travelling to Lagos, adding that the accident was caused by impatience, speeding and struggle for right of way.

He said, “A Peugeot J5 with number plate, XS 626 LSV, and a DAF articulated vehicle with number plate, AA 902 MML, had an accident as both drivers were struggling for the right of the way. They were both going to Lagos when the accident happened around 9.30am on Sunday. It happened just before the campus of the Dominion University in Sepo, on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

“There were 96 people involved, with 17 confirmed dead. It is obvious that both drivers were speeding and suddenly lost control of the vehicles. The Peugeot bus was loaded with passengers and goods, but the casualty figure rose because the other vehicle was travelling to Lagos with huge number of illegal passengers.”