

Nine die in Lagos crash, mob burns truck

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Tragedy struck at the University of Lagos Waterfront end of the Third Mainland Bridge, Lagos State, on Wednesday after a Mazda bus with number plate, AKD 292 XL, rammed into a stationary truck.

No fewer than nine people, including the bus driver, reportedly died on the spot.

Three other passengers, who sustained serious injuries, were said to have been taken to the Gbagada General Hospital, Gbagada.

The driver of the truck reportedly fled the scene after seeing the enormity of the fatality.

PUNCH Metro learnt that an angry mob, which besieged the scene, set fire to the truck and injured an official of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency.

Firefighters from the Lagos State Fire Service later put out the fire as the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owooseni, appeased the youths.

A witness and bus driver, who identified himself simply as Kunmi, said the incident happened around 10pm, adding that nine persons died.

Kunmi, who spoke in Yoruba, explained that the failure of the truck driver to put a sign on the road to indicate that his vehicle had broken down, led to the tragedy.

He said, "The bus was coming from Ajah/Lekki area en route to Oshodi. It was on the Third Mainland Bridge, moving toward Oworonsoki. There was, however, a truck that had broken down on the road. The engine was still running.

"The driver of the bus, who did not see the truck, rammed into it.

"People were not willing to stop their vehicles to assist the victims. I met some policemen on the ground. We used my spanner to break open the door. But the passengers were trapped. We wanted to use my vehicle to pull the bus from the truck, but we couldn't. We later stopped another truck, which assisted us.

"A rescue agency later brought a sledgehammer that we used to open up the vehicle and bring out nine bodies, including that of the driver, Segun. The driver still had the fares he collected in his hand. He didn't have a conductor. We left the scene around 2am on Thursday."

Kunmi said policemen from the Adekunle division and officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, LASEMA, and the State Environmental Health Monitoring Unit were part of the rescue operation.

He said three survivors, who were in critical conditions, were taken in an ambulance to the Gbagada General Hospital.

An official of LASTMA, who spoke on condition of anonymity, however, claimed that eight people died, saying their remains were mangled.

The official said the Lagos CP gave some money to the family of the driver, who insisted on taking the body to Ibadan, Oyo State, for burial.

He said, "The driver of the bus was at top speed when he rammed into the stationary truck. About 80 per cent of the bus was crushed and that was why the driver and passengers on the first three rows died on the spot. Three people at the back, who did not die, lost their limbs.

"SEHMU wanted to take all the corpses to the mortuary, but the friends and family members of the driver

insisted on taking him to Ibadan the same night. The Lagos CP, Owoseni, gave them some money and asked a police escort to follow them.”

The LASTMA official said a mob, made up of sympathisers and some hoodlums, set fire to the truck that caused the accident.

He said the mob wanted to cause more destruction but the police boss urged them to be calm, assuring that justice would be served.

The General Manager of LASEMA, Michael Akindele, said five people died in the accident.

He said, “According to the investigation conducted by LASEMA’s Emergency Response Team, the commercial bus rammed into the stationary truck while speeding.

“The vehicle was later extricated by the ERT, and five male bodies were recovered dead. Six other adult male victims were rescued alive with severe injuries. They were taken to the Accident and Emergency Centre (Trauma Centre) and the Gbagada General Hospital by LASAMBUS.

“The dead bodies were also removed by SEHMU to the Mainland Hospital Mortuary, except the bus driver whose body was released at the request of the family members and friends through the intervention of the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, who was present at the scene of the accident.”

Akindele said the mob that burnt the truck also injured an official of the agency, adding that the state firefighters put out the fire.

The LASEMA boss, while commiserating with the families of the deceased, urged motorists to be cautious while driving at night.

A top official of the Gbagada General Hospital said three victims were brought to the hospital.

“Three of the accident victims were brought to the hospital; none of them died. Two are fully conscious; they had bruises. One is still unconscious,” he said.

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Dolapo Badmos, confirmed the incident, adding that investigations were ongoing.

She said, “We are investigating the case. The CP was at the scene of the incident. It was an accident that

could have been prevented.”

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