

Molten iron kills four Ogun workers in Indian steel company

Published [April 17, 2019](#)

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Entrance to the steel company

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There was a protest on the premises of an Indian steel company, African Foundries Limited on the Sagamu-Ikorodu Road, Ogun State, after four workers reportedly died after molten iron poured on them.

Colleagues of the victims protested against what they termed an unsafe working environment, poor remuneration and attempted cover-up of the death of the victims by the management of the company.

Our correspondent, who visited the company on Monday, observed that a large number of trucks that carried scrap lined up the road as they were prevented from entering the company.

The visitors' room was littered with broken shards of glass from the door and window.

The premises were unkempt, as sticks and stone could be seen around. There was heavy presence of policemen and operatives of the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad.

Some workers told our correspondent that the company had asked them not to speak to any member of the public concerning the incident.

They said they were asked to go back home until Tuesday when the company would resume operation, noting that the management had promised to take care of the families of their dead colleagues.

But a worker, who defied the order and spoke to *PUNCH Metro* on condition of anonymity, said the company had never been friendly with its workers.

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He said many of them had been working with the company for the past 13 years without being staffed.

The worker alleged that anytime a misfortune befell any worker, the company denied responsibility on the claim that they were contract workers.

He said the highest compensation the company ever paid to families of workers who died in the past was N100,000, adding that workers in the steel company were treated like slaves.

He said, “I joined this company in 2006. People have been dying before I started working here; they are still dying. It is a common occurrence. The one that happened last Thursday in which four persons died was catastrophic. It used to be one or two persons.

“When it comes to compensation, they label those that die in the course of their work as contract workers.”

A resident of the area, who identified himself only as Bayo, said working in the company was like going on a suicide mission.

He noted that workers were not safe as industrial accidents were recurrent.

Efforts to speak to the Public Relations Officer of the company proved abortive.

A receptionist, who spoke to *PUNCH Metro*, asked our correspondent to wait for a senior staff member of the company, after which he was later told that nobody was available for comment.

The Police Public Relations Officer in Ogun State, Abimbola Oyeyemi, confirmed the death of the four workers and the protest.

He added that policemen were deployed in the area to prevent the protest from escalating as hoodlums wanted to hijack it to loot the company.

“Yes, I am aware of the four workers that died on Thursday. The four workers did not fall from anywhere. There is a place where those workers used to bath after the closing hour.

“They were bathing when the pipe used in melting the iron broke and the content of the pipe poured on them. That was what led to their death.

“The following day, workers staged a protest; policemen were drafted there to ensure that they did not vandalise any property and that no other life was lost during the protest.

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“As I speak to you, the command is facilitating a meeting between the company and families of the victims. I think they are still negotiating.

“The police have been able to calm the situation,” he said.