

# Buhari mourns as Kogi tanker explosion claims schoolchildren, family of five, others

---

Published September 24, 2020



## Olalekan Adetayo and Gbenga Odogun

The President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), on Wednesday, said he was disturbed by the petroleum tanker explosion that claimed 23 lives earlier in the day in Lokoja, Kogi State.

Most of the victims of the tanker explosion, which occurred in the Felele area of Lokoja, along the Lokoja/Abuja Highway, were schoolchildren and students of the state-owned polytechnic located a short distance away from the scene.

A man from Okene was said to have lost six children to the inferno, while a family of five was wiped out in the accident that some referred to as the worst in the year so far.

The victims included five students of the Kogi State Polytechnic and three nursery pupils, who were on their way to school.

Also, pupils from the Baptist Academy, whose number had yet to be ascertained, were among those killed.

Also killed was a businessman, identified simply as Samson, alongside his wife and three children.

Samson was said that be dealing in sewing machines and wanted to drop off his children at school as had become his daily routine before opening his shop.

The 33,000-litre tanker, which was laden with Premium Motor Spirit and belonged to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, was said to have suffered brake failure around 8am and rammed into five cars, two motorcycles and three tricycles, killing all the occupants.

Buhari said the tragedy represented “another disturbing and saddening incident in the litany of tragedies that have befallen our country.”

Buhari’s position was contained in a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, titled: ‘President Buhari mourns victims of Lokoja tanker explosion’.

Shehu quoted the President as expressing worry over the frequency of what he called “large-scale tragedies” in the country.

**READ ALSO: [Kaduna and the trouble with castrating female rapists](#)**

Buhari was also said to have regretted that the frequent incidents, which he described as a national scandal, were mostly caused by people’s indifference to safety standards.

The President was quoted to have said, “I am seriously worried about the frequency of these unfortunate and large-scale tragedies in the country, which cause needless deaths.

“These frequent incidents that result in loss of lives and property are a national scandal caused by our indifference to safety standards.

“Many accidents are preventable if proper proactive and precautionary measures are put in place or properly observed as routine policies.

“Ours is a country where we move on whenever tragedies occur instead of taking preventive safety measures to forestall future calamities.”

The President therefore called on the country’s transport authorities, traffic and road management agencies as well as law enforcement officials to sit up and enforce safety standards with more seriousness.

He added, “Refusal to do the right thing can cause potential tragic problems that harm innocent people.

“Nigeria is not having a shortage of laws and regulations, but our problem is lack of zeal to enforce those laws and regulations for the sake of public safety.”

He condoled with the state government and the bereaved families.

“I was about crossing the road when I noticed the driver of the tanker signalling of the impending danger due to brake failure, and before one could say Jack Robinson, the 33,000-litre tanker conveying Premium Motor Spirit fell on its side and started spilling the content, which caught fire and burnt all vehicles in the vicinity,” an eyewitness, who spoke on condition anonymity, told *PUNCH Metro*.

One of our correspondents, who got to the scene a few minutes after the explosion, counted five burnt cars, three tricycles and two motorcycles.

Although the Sector Commander of the Federal Road safety Corps in the state, Idris Fika Ali, said 23 persons lost their lives, sources said close to 40 casualties might have been recorded.

It was gathered that FRSC personnel, who got to the scene around 10am, came with an ambulance from the Rescue/Rehabilitation Team to evacuate the corpses, while residents made efforts to identify some of the victims.

Meanwhile, the state governor, Yahaya Bello, has expressed shock and sorrow over the fatal tanker explosion.

A statement issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Onogwu Mohammed, read in part, “Governor Bello is very sad to learn of the tragic loss of lives, many vehicles, property and other valuables in the petrol tanker fire, while expressing his deepest condolences to the families of those affected by the ugly occurrence.

“He said this is sadly the greatest tragedy the state has witnessed in recent times, while describing the unfortunate accident as a sad development and shares the feeling of those who lost their loved ones in this incident.”

#### **YOU MAY ALSO LIKE: [I used to be a plumber, says Sanwo-Olu](#)**

The governor also urged the students of Kogi State Polytechnic to remain calm and peaceful, stating that he equally shared in their grieving moment over the death of some of their colleagues in the disaster.

The state Commissioner for Information and Communications, Kingsley Fanwo, who also visited the scene, said the state government would not tolerate reckless driving on its roads.

According to him, the state government “will stop at nothing to protect the lives of the citizens from needless deaths resulting from reckless road use.”

He described the incident as unfortunate as the victims were burnt beyond recognition.

“This is sad and unacceptable,” he said while insisting that all road users must begin to act responsibly.

Fanwo stated, “This is one accident too many and we lost many of our citizens. The governor is clearly and understandably sad about this and has directed that we intensify campaign against reckless driving, especially on the ever-busy NATACO-Felele Expressway.

“The Ministry of Transportation is coming up with a collaboration programme with the Ministry of Information and Communications to enlighten and educate road users about their responsibly.

“Some of those who died today were young people, who were destroyed in their prime. We cannot continue like this.”

Fanwo said truck drivers must desist from using drugs and urged the FRSC and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to clamp down on truck drivers, who drive under the influence of drugs.