

24 killed, others injured in Lagos, Oyo, Enugu crashes

Naomi Chima and
Raphael Ede with
agency report

NO fewer than 24 persons lost their lives in separate crashes in Lagos, Enugu, and Oyo states on Thursday.

In Enugu State, the accident involving a truck and an 18-seater bus killed eight persons near the CBN bus stop along the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway.

The driver, identified simply as Simeon, was said to be conveying the passengers to a destination in the state when he attempted to overtake a truck.

An eyewitness, who confirmed the development to one of our correspondents, said the driver rammed into the truck, adding that no fewer than eight corpses were recovered from the scene.

Ejike said, "The bus was filled with commuters from



• A scene of one of the crashes

Abakpa, in Enugu East Local Government Area of the state, and was heading to the New Market community when the accident occurred.

"The driver, Simeon, was coming from Abakpa and attempted to overtake another vehicle that was emitting too much smoke.

"As he attempted to overtake the truck that was very close, the next thing we heard was a loud sound and the bus was completely

damaged. I don't know how many survived but I counted eight dead bodies on the floor," he said.

It was learnt that the injured victims and corpses were taken to the Enugu State University Teaching Hospital.

Efforts to speak with the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, were not successful.

He had yet to respond to a text message at the time of filing this report.

In another accident in Lagos State, a driver of a black Honda Civic car with number plate EPE 666 BC was crushed to death by a commercial bus driver in the Meiran area of the state.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the victim, after dropping off his family at the Meiran Estate, was on his way to a destination when the commercial bus driver, while driving against traffic, rammed into him.

The impact of the crash that occurred around 9am on Thursday killed the driver of the black Honda Civic car.

Upon realising the gravity of the collision, the driver of the Volkswagen commercial bus with number plate EPE 964XX fled.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, when contacted, confirmed the crash.

The spokesperson for the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, Taofiq Adebayo, also confirmed the incident.

He said, "A Volkswagen commercial bus driver with number plate, EPE 964XX, while driving one-way at high speed collided with a private car, Honda Civic, with number plate, EPE 666 BC.

The accident, according to LASTMA (Bravo), Ajanlekoko Anthony, occurred around 9.30am as

the driver of the Honda Civic car sustained a serious neck injury and died instantly in a pool of blood."

Adebayo, who noted that the deceased driver was a resident at Meiran Estate, said officials of the agency handed his corpse over to his relatives.

He noted that the General Manager of the agency, Bolaji Oreagba, warned motorists, both private and commercial, to desist from disobeying traffic laws, particularly driving against traffic in the state.

Also in Lagos, five persons were burnt beyond recognition while three others sustained injuries in a crash on the Badagry-Seme Expressway on Thursday.

According to the News Agency of Nigeria, Mr Sulaiman Taiwo, Unit Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps at Badagry, confirmed the

accident.

He said the accident which involved a Honda Pilot SUV with number plate LSR 772 HE and a motorcycle with an unidentifiable number plate occurred at the Akoro village end of the expressway.

The driver of the SUV collided with the motorcycle resulting in an explosion. By the time we got to the scene, the raging fire had burnt three persons beyond recognition, while two others lost their lives during the rescue operation.

Three persons that survived the inferno were taken to the general hospital in Badagry while the five corpses were deposited at the mortuary in the same hospital," Taiwo told NAN.

The Medical Director, Badagry General Hospital, Dr Olatunde Bakare, said relatives of deceased persons had claimed the corpses, adding that the three injured victims were still receiving treatment at the emergency unit of the hospital.

Meanwhile, the FRSC on Thursday said 10 passengers got burnt to death after two commercial buses collided on Oyo-Ogbomoso Road, Oyo State.

According to the FRSC Sector Commander in the state, Joshua Adekanye, the crash involving a Mazda and a Toyota Hiace bus occurred around 5.30am around kilometre 12, Ijawaya, Oyo-Ogbomoso Road.

He said the buses with number plates LEM 963 XA and NSR 222 ZS were coming from Lagos and Nasarawa states respectively.

Adekanye said immediately after the vehicles collided, they went caught fire, resulting in the burning of the occupants.

Attributing the cause of the accident to speeding and overloading, Adekanye called on motorists to always avoid night travelling, speeding and overloading.

Roadblock: Victims tackle lawless soldiers over extortion, harassment

Uthman Salami

FOLLOWING a report by PUNCH Metro on the activities of soldiers mounting a roadblock at the Orimerunmu end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway to extort motorists and in the process, exposing them alongside residents in communities within and beyond the point of the roadblock to attacks by hoodlums, more victims have surfaced to testify to the despicable actions of the soldiers on the expressway.

A PUNCHman, Olalekan Adetayo, had in a report on Thursday, narrated how a machete-wielding hoodlum, used a machete to smash his vehicle's windshields and robbed him of his mobile phone while stuck in the gridlock caused by the soldiers allegedly extorting motorists under the guise of conducting security checks on the expressway.

Explaining that the attack

happened on his way home around midnight, Adetayo, while expressing shock over the development, said he again sighted the soldiers operating freely at the roadblocks on his way home on Wednesday.

"The soldiers are still there; I saw them operating at the roadblock and I still ran into the gridlock caused by the slow-paced movements of vehicles accessing the narrow opening the soldiers created at the roadblock," the PUNCHman said.

Reacting to the report, a journalist with an online news platform, Adeola Balogun, who, daily, plies the expressway to navigate his home, reached out to PUNCH Metro and said the soldiers had been using the roadblocks to extort money from motorists for about five years.

Despite a series of complaints on the actions of the soldiers to the military authorities, he said nothing had been done, adding that the



• COAS, Faruk Yahaya

authorities feigned ignorance to their outcry.

Balogun said, "The army roadblock has been there for almost five years. When I close at late hours, on my way home, I do



• The vandalised car

see these soldiers harassing and extorting money from motorists at the roadblock.

"When they started, they blocked both sides of the road, leaving only a very small and narrow pathway for

motorists to navigate. As a result, traffic began to build up. Motorists, especially the heavy-duty vehicles plying the spots during the hour of the military operations were major victims.

"Although, I have never been robbed on the road before but the soldiers always harass me and other motorists on the road. They do not care who you are. They treat motorists with impunity. I remember a time when a commercial bus driver gave them money. They wanted to give him his balance so they used my car's headlamp to give the driver his balance."

Also, a fuel attendant, who spoke to our correspondent on condition of anonymity for security reasons, said hoodlums had been taking advantage of the situation to unleash terror on motorists and residents around Orimerunmu and other adjoining communities.

He further alleged that the roadblock might have been

sanctioned by high-ranking officers in the military considering the number of soldiers that used to be present during the operation at night.

He said, "There is no way those at the helm of affairs would not be aware of the operations of these soldiers. All of them used to pass here in the night. They see these roadblocks. If they were not ordered to be here, someone might have reported them. But that did not happen."

"The soldiers used to be more than 10 in number at that checkpoint. If you want to see their true figures, come to this place anytime from 9.30pm. Although they may not have started operations at this time, you will see them turn out in groups. Sometimes, they used to come with a branded vehicle and in military uniform."

Also, a motorcycle rider, Sunday Ifeanyi, said hoodlums, while taking advantage of the gridlock, used an object to smash his head and robbed his colleague of his

motorcycle.

"There was a time when one of my colleagues had his head smashed and his motorcycle stolen along the area. I will say the long stretch of traffic on the axis was a factor," Ifeanyi said.

A resident, while speaking anonymously to our correspondent for security reasons, urged relevant authorities to intervene to curb the situation, adding that the insecurity in the area had become worrisome.

He said, "Only the government can intervene. The criminal activities on this axis are on the increase, but if the government intervenes, these criminal activities would stop."

Contacted, the spokesperson, 81 Division, Nigerian Army, Lt-Col. Olabisi Ayeni, said, "Let's get to the root of this matter so that I can give you correct information and hit the nail on the head: Let me do my research very well. Once the COs in charge of that unit respond to my inquiry, I will get you feedback."