

# Pregnant women, children among Ondo tanker fire victims - Eyewitness

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By Peter Dada

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The Ondo Sector Command of the Federal Road Safety Corps has disclosed that eight people lost their lives in the petrol tanker fire that occurred along the Benin-Ore-Sagamu Expressway on Sunday.

This is just as an eyewitness told our correspondent that two pregnant women and three children were among the victims of the fire.

The FRSC's casualty figure contradicted the earlier report on the incident which claimed that 20 persons were burnt to death.

Speaking on the incident on Monday, the Sector Commander of the FRSC, Mr Ezekiel Son'Allah, confirmed that the victims were scooping fuel from the fallen tanker when the fire broke out.

"The accident was caused by a loss of concentration and speed limit violation on the part of the driver involved. Eight people died.

"The driver and motor boy of the vehicle escaped unhurt, but the eight villagers scooping fuel got burnt in the act. The dead bodies were taken to the morgue of the General Hospital, Ore," he said.

Some residents of the area who spoke about the incident insisted that over 20 people, including two pregnant women and three children, died in the fire while others sustained injuries.

They also said not all the victims were scooping fuel, explaining that some of the victims were passersby.

A resident, Susan Jerry, confirmed that some of the victims went to the scene of the incident to scoop petrol.

"More than 20 persons were burnt beyond recognition. Two pregnant women and three children were among the deceased," Jerry said.

Another resident, Tijani Dickola, said the tanker driver lost control of the vehicle and entered the ditch around 4.30pm on Sunday.

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He added that the people were at the scene of the incident, scooping the fuel till the incident happened around 6pm.

“This morning (Monday), I met about 10 burnt dead bodies while those around the tanker cannot be recognised. They were packed inside a sack by officials of the FRSC,” he said.

He explained that trouble started when the fuel started spilling into a stream in the community while the residents continued to scoop the fuel with buckets and kegs until the explosion occurred.

He added, “Unfortunately, a woman was cooking in her kitchen when the inflammable product on the water caught fire, burning the woman to death while the fire travelled back to the tanker.

“A pregnant woman who was crossing the stream with three other minors were caught in the river and burnt beyond recognition. No one could move to save them. Some other people who were close to the tanker were also badly affected. Their remains were packed this morning.”

Meanwhile, the state government has described the incident as tragic and unfortunate.

The government’s reaction was contained in a statement by the state Commissioner for Information Orientation, Mrs Bamidele Ademola-Olateju.

Also, the state chapter of the All Progressives Congress has described the incident as unfortunate.

The party’s position was contained in a statement issued by its Publicity Secretary, Mr Alex Kalejaiye.

Similarly, the lawmaker representing Odigbo 1 Constituency, Mr Olatunji Ifabiyi, in his condolence message on Monday, described the incident as unfortunate.