

Tears as Jigawa buries 153 tanker explosion victims

17th October 2024



Jigawa State map

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There was wailing on Wednesday in Majiya town, in the Taura Local Government Area of Jigawa State, following the explosion of a petrol-laden tanker, leading to the death of at least 153 people.

It was reported that 94 persons lost their lives on the spot, while many injured others were rushed to Ringim General Hospital with doctors battling to save their lives.

Due to the high number of casualties, other victims were rushed to the Federal Medical Centre in Birnin Kudu, when there was no more bed space at Ringim Hospital.

President Bola Tinubu, his wife, Oluremi, Vice-President Kashim Shettima, governors and many other Nigerians expressed grief over the incident.

The Jigawa State Emergency Management Agency confirmed 147 were given mass burial, following the explosion, with over 55 admitted to various hospitals.

Most of the victims were burnt beyond recognition.

At the time of going to bed, a statement from the Public Relations Officer of the Jigawa State Police Command, Lawan Shiisu Adam, confirmed 153 dead and over 100 receiving treatment in hospitals.

The deceased were given a mass burial in Majiya town on Wednesday.

The incident occurred at about 11:30 pm on Tuesday in Majia, when the tanker driver lost control near Khadija University.

The tanker was said to have left Kano and was on its way to Nguru town in Yobe State before the driver lost control and it fell with its content.

It was gathered that after the incident, some people went there to scoop the product, a development that eventually led to the explosion.

Confirming the number of casualties as 147, the Executive Secretary of the Jigawa State Emergency Management Agency, Dr Haruna Mairiga, said his men rescued about 50 other persons to different hospitals in the state.

He said, “When we got there, initially we were told about 95 persons died but during the mass burial, we were able to count 147 bodies whom we all gave mass burial.

“We also rescued about 50 injured persons to different hospitals in the state “

The police spokesman, in his confirmation, said, “The devastating incident occurred on October 15, 2024, at about 2230hrs, involving a petrol tanker with registration number KMC 6412 F, driven by one Yusuf Mohd ‘m’ age 32yrs of Hotoro Quarters, Kano State.

“The tanker was travelling from Kano to Nguru, Yobe State, when the driver lost control near Khadija University in Majia town, Taura LGA, causing it to overturn and spill fuel.

“The petrol entered through the drainage to the outskirts of the village. Unfortunately, villagers attempted to scoop petrol from the drainage, resulting in a flame that engulfed the area and many people reportedly perished.”

He said the Area Commander Ringim, Divisional Police Officer Gujungu and their men swiftly raced to the scene.

“One hundred and five (105) corpses have been evacuated, while 50 injured persons were rushed to Ringim and Hadejia General Hospitals for medical attention.

“The fire was successfully extinguished through the combined efforts of police officers, firefighters, and good Samaritans.

The police command attributed the high number of casualties and injured persons to desperate moves by the people in the area to scoop the product.

Adam said, "Despite the efforts of the police, who had cordoned off the area and issued warnings to the public, people resisted and started scooping the fuel, triggering a devastating explosion," he said.

He added that the police struggled to keep control of the scene, with many bystanders ignoring warnings and moving dangerously close to the accident site.

"The tanker, loaded with petrol, ignited shortly after the crash, causing an inferno that engulfed numerous people in the vicinity.

"The injured were immediately rushed to the General Hospital at Ringim, where medical personnel are working around the clock to treat the victims.

"However, the death toll is likely to rise as several of the injured remain in critical condition."

He said the state Commissioner of Police, A.T. Abdullahi, has since condoled and sympathised with the residents of the state, especially the people of Majiya town where the incident happened.

Commiserating with the people, Governor Umar Namadi expressed sorrow over the tragic loss of lives.

Namadi, who swiftly visited the scene of the incident, also joined in performing the funeral prayer for the deceased.

He described the incident as the greatest tragedy that has befallen Jigawa State.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims during this painful time.

“We stand in solidarity with those who have lost loved ones and those injured in this tragic incident,” the governor said.

The governor also said the government would cater to the treatment of all those injured in the inferno.

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“The government will ensure that the affected families receive the needed assistance as we continue to work on preventing such tragedies in the future,” he said.

Tinubu, on Monday, directed the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume, to lead a Federal Government delegation to Jigawa.

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He also directed that emergency aid, including medical supplies, food and shelter, be extended to 50 injured persons receiving treatment and others affected by the fire.

A statement signed Wednesday by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga, said, “The government delegation will comprise [Jigawa’s immediate past governor who is now] the Minister of Defence, Mohammed Abubakar; Minister of Transportation, Saidu Alkali; Corps Marshal of the Federal Roads Safety Corps, Mr Shehu Mohammed; and the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Community Engagement (North-West), Abdullahi Yakasai.”

Onanuga said that while in Jigawa, the delegation would visit the incident scene to assess the situation and visit injured persons in the hospital.

“The President, with a heavy heart, joins the Vice President in extending his deepest condolences to the families of the victims of this devastating incident.

“He expresses his heartfelt prayers and support to the government and people of Jigawa during this time of tragic loss and grief.

“He prays for divine comfort for the bereaved families and the peaceful repose for the souls of the departed,” the statement read.

President Tinubu also reassured the nation that the Federal Government, in collaboration with states, is committed to the swift and comprehensive review of fuel transportation safety protocols nationwide.

Vice President Kashim Shettima announced immediate intervention and called for a comprehensive review of fuel transportation safety protocols across Nigeria.

Shettima expressed sorrow, particularly for the families who lost loved ones in the tragic incident and prayed that Almighty Allah grant them the fortitude to bear the loss.

In a condolence message on Wednesday signed by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Communication, Stanley Nkwocha, Shettima said, “My heart aches for those who have had their families torn apart by this disaster.”

It said, “This devastating incident has shaken us all to our core. The Federal Government stands with the people of Jigawa.

“We are mobilising all necessary resources to support the injured and assist the families affected by this calamity.”

The VP also directed the immediate deployment of the National Emergency Management Agency personnel and resources to Jigawa State.

In a similar vein, the First Lady, Mrs Tinubu, in a statement, wrote, “I condole with the governor of Jigawa State, His Excellency, Mallam Umar Namadi and the good people of the State on the unfortunate tanker explosion which occurred on Tuesday, October 15, 2024.

“This tragic incident, which left many dead, several injured and loss of properties, is most unfortunate.

“My thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. I pray God to grant the friends, families and loved ones of the departed souls the fortitude to bear the painful loss and grant speedy recovery to the injured.

“May Almighty Allah grant Aljanah Fridaus to the departed and comfort all those affected by this tragedy.”

The Nigeria Governor’s Forum mourned the deceased in a statement signed by the Governor of Kwara State and Chairman of the Forum, Mallam AbdulRaman AbdulRazaq, on Wednesday.

The statement said, “Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF) is saddened at the reported death of 105 persons in the Tuesday petrol tanker explosion in Majia town in Jigawa State.

“The forum sends its heartfelt condolences to the people and government of Jigawa State on this sad incident, especially families that lost their loved ones and those who sustained injuries in the fire.”

The NGF said the reported circumstances of the incident were worrisome, urging citizens to avoid taking advantage of petrol spills because of its volatility and existential danger.

“This unfortunate incident again calls attention to a need for improved safety protocols in the handling of combustible materials like petrol, including during unforeseen circumstances such as accidents,” the forum said.

“Our hearts are with His Excellency Governor Umar Namadi, the people of the state, and families involved in the incident.

“We ask Almighty Allah to grant them solace at this trying time and admit the deceased to al-Jannah Firdaus,” the statement said.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government, via the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, has instructed the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority to initiate a thorough investigation into the tanker explosion.

The directive was issued by the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Heineken Lokpobiri, as he regretted the circumstances surrounding this unfortunate incident.

Lokpobiri, in a statement signed by his Special Adviser, Media and Communications, Nneamaka Okafor, offered heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those affected by this devastating incident.

The statement read, “The Minister of Petroleum Resources, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic petrol tanker explosion that occurred in Majiya town, Taura Local Government Area, Jigawa State, resulting in the loss of over 100 lives and leaving dozens more injured.

“On behalf of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources and the Federal Government, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those affected by this devastating incident.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the injured, and we wish them a swift and full recovery.”