

# Ibadan funfair tragedy: Ooni's ex-wife, others face probe as 32 children feared killed

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The Oyo State Police Command says it is investigating the circumstances surrounding the alleged death of 32 children during a stampede at a funfair in Ibadan, the state capital, on Wednesday.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered from multiple eyewitness accounts that the stampede occurred when participants rushed to gain access to the venue of the event reportedly organised by the ex-queen of the Ooni of Ife, Prophetess Naomi Shikemi, and an Ibadan-based broadcaster, Oriyomi Hamzat.

Investigations by *PUNCH Metro* also showed that the victims were stampeded to death while trying to break through the main gate of the school.

It was further gathered that provision was made for 5,000 children but the number that turned up for the event was reportedly over 7, 500.

Narrating the scenario in a video, an eyewitness at the scene of the incident, who did not mention her name, noted that the organisers had invited 5,000 participants for the funfair but the situation got out of control when the scene became rowdy leading to a stampede that led to several casualties.

She said, “Oriyomi Hamzat said he wanted 5,000 participants but because we were not organised, that was why the situation got to this. We were not even up to 5,000 participants.”

Another participant claimed he lost a child during the incident.

“Rather than attend to us very well, they wanted to fight us. We just lost one child who has been taken to the University College Hospital,” he said.

The video showed rowdy scenes as some children were rushed out of the venue while a woman wailed about the loss of her child following the stampede.

Reacting to the incident, the management of Agidigbo FM, owned by Oriyomi Hamzat, sympathised with the victims in a statement signed by its Director of Programmes, Olayinka Abdulwahab.

Abdulwahab, however, stressed that the radio station was a media partner to the event and not the organiser of the funfair.

He stressed that the management made frantic moves to sensitise the participants when it realised that the venue was crowded.

Abdulwahab stated, “This is to inform the general public that the management of Agidigbo FM, Ibadan received the news of the tragedy that heralded the children’s funfair at Islamic High School, Bashorun, Ibadan, organised by the WINGS Foundation, with great shock and wholeheartedly commiserate with the families involved.

“Amidst the tragedy, the news making the rounds is that Agidigbo FM is the organiser of the children’s funfair. However, the management wishes to state that Agidigbo FM is not the organiser of the event but one of the media outfits used to promote the event.

“Upon receiving the notice that a mammoth crowd had assembled before 5am at the venue, Agidigbo FM, the people’s voice, used all media strategies to sensitise the populace with jingles and public service announcements from that time, that people should stop going to the venue of the funfair.

“This is not the time to spread misinformation. The management of Agidigbo FM implores the general public to continue to pray for the speedy recovery of those in various hospitals and sympathises with the family of those who lost their lives.”

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When contacted via a text message for a reaction, the spokesperson for the Oyo State Police Command, Adewale Osifeso, confirmed the incident, noting that an investigation had commenced.

“Investigation is in progress. Updates will be provided accordingly, please,” Osifeso said.

Multiple sources told our correspondents that some of the children, including their parents, were said to have kept vigil at the venue of the event.

One of our correspondents observed that an uncontrollable crowd caused gridlock on the Basorun-Idi Ape Road.

An Administrative Officer of Patnas Hospital, Basorun, where some of the victims were admitted, Olufeyemi Tolulope, said, “The affected children were brought in some minutes past 8am. Six children were brought into the hospital out of which five died while the other one is recuperating.

“We were told that the deceased fainted at the venue of the event. We were able to rescue one while the remaining five died. The surviving child has been discharged and released to her parents.

“One of the parents of the deceased, who was sighted at the hospital premises wailing, said, “I did not bargain for what happened to me. We slept together at home yesterday (Tuesday) not knowing that it would be the last time. My daughter is not dead. Please doctor wake her up.”

Other parents, who did not want their names in print, called on the government to prevail on the management of the various hospitals for the release of the corpses of their children.

The victims, according to a statement by the state's Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Dotun Oyelade, were admitted at the following hospitals: Patnas Hospital, Basorun; Western Hospital, Basorun; Ring Road State Hospital; Molly Specialist Hospital and University College Hospital.

One of our correspondents was turned back at Molly Hospital, Idi-Ape and Western Hospital, Basorun by the security guards, who insisted that no victim was on admission at the two hospitals.

However, some of the parents were sighted at UCH lamenting the death of their children.

While at the UCH, the hospital's Public Relations Officer, Mrs Funmi Adetuyibi, told *PUNCH Metro* that five of the victims of the incident, were brought in dead.

She, however, did not confirm the sex or age bracket of the victims, adding that none of the victims of the incident was on admission at the facility as of the time of filing this report.

Also at Molly Hospital, an eyewitness, who did not want his name mentioned, told our correspondent that some unspecified victims brought to the hospital by rescue workers were brought in dead.

A staff member of the hospital, who spoke with PUNCH Metro on condition of anonymity, said none of the victims of the tragedy was on admission as of the time one of our correspondents visited the facility at past 7pm on Wednesday.

Efforts to get the Ooni's ex-wife, Naomi, the organiser of the event that led to the stampede, proved abortive as her phone number was not available. A text message sent to her was not responded to too as of the time of filing this report.