

Niger explosion: Tinubu, Buhari, others mourn as death toll hits 86

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THE death toll in the petrol tanker explosion at Dikko Junction near Suleja in Niger State has risen to 86, with 55 persons injured and receiving treatment at the hospital.

By Saturday when the incident happened, the death toll was put at 70 and 50 injured.

However, more corpses have since been recovered and given mass burial in Dikko.

A speeding fuel tanker crashed on Saturday morning in Dikko Junction between Niger and Kaduna states.

The tanker, in the process of scooping fuel which spilled on the tarred road, exploded with a heavy flame which killed all the residents trying to scoop fuel as well as others who attempted to rescue them.

The Director General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency, Abdullahi Baba-Arah, in a statement on Sunday, said the agency, as well as the Gurara Local Government Area authorities and kind-hearted volunteers, conducted the mass burial between 5 pm and 12 am.

"A total number of 86 persons have been confirmed dead, with their corpses recovered and buried.

"80 of them are in mass graves at Dikko PHC premises, while five were carried away for burial in the town by relatives and one died in Dikko PHC.

"The mass burial was carried out by NSEMA in collaboration with Gurara LGA and very brave, kind-hearted volunteers between the hours of 5 pm and 12 am.

"The number of injured now stands at 55 with one dead in Dikko PHC," Baba-Arah stated.

Niger State Governor, Mohammed Bago, who visited the scene of the explosion, banned vehicles coming from the Maje axis from passing

through the Dikko bridge.

In a statement on Sunday, issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Bologi Ibrahim, the governor directed the Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps to establish a detachment in the area to ensure the enforcement of the directive.

Reacting to the incident, President Bola Tinubu expressed deep sorrow in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga.

The President mourned the victims and expressed his condolences to the families affected, as well as to the government and people of Niger State.

Tinubu also directed the relevant agencies to provide comprehensive medical care to the injured and instructed security and road safety authorities to implement measures to avert similar incidents.

The President mandated the National Orientation Agency to initiate a nationwide educational campaign to raise

public awareness about the severe risks and environmental dangers of scooping fuel from fallen tankers.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said the Federal Government directed the immediate transfer of victims of the recent tanker explosion from Suleja General Hospital to tertiary health facilities, to ensure prompt and enhanced medical care.

Idris, who was joined by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr Nentawe Yikwatda, at the explosion scene, noted that the President had instructed the Federal Ministry of Health, the National Emergency Management Agency, and other agencies to ensure that critically injured victims received urgent care at specialist hospitals.

Former President Muhammadu Buhari expressed condolences in a statement by his media aide, Garba Shehu.

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Gaza: UN, others cheer as freed Israelis reunite with families

THREE female hostages freed by Hamas were reunited with their mothers inside Israel, Reuters reports.

Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Younis with crowds cheering and chanting. In the north of the territory, bombed into oblivion in the war's most intense fighting, people picked their way on narrow roads through a devastated landscape of rubble and twisted metal.

"I feel like at last I found some water to drink after being lost in the desert for 15 months," Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year, said after the fighting stopped. "I feel alive again."

In Tel Aviv, hundreds of Israelis in a square outside the defence headquarters

watched a live broadcast from Gaza showing the hostage release on a giant screen. The crowd cheered, embraced and wept as three female hostages could be seen getting into a Red Cross vehicle surrounded by armed Hamas fighters.

Soon after, the Israeli military said Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher and Emily Damari had been reunited with their mothers at a meeting point inside Israel, close to the kibbutz and nearby music festival where they had been abducted in the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas raid that precipitated the war.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, buses were awaiting the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention. Hamas said the first group to be freed in exchange for the hostages includes 69 women and 21 teenage boys.

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