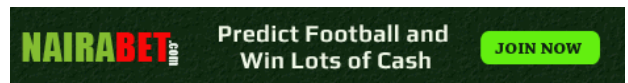


August 28, 2015, 11:29 AM WAT

YOU ARE AT: [Home](#) » [National](#) » [Horror at Ore](#)

Horror at Ore

1

BY OUR REPORTER ON AUGUST 28, 2015

NATIONAL

How 16 passengers died in fatal road crash

By Ola Kehinde-Balogun

"It was a horrible sight," Mr. Samuel Nwosisi, recalled, cringing as he spoke. He was at the scene of Wednesday's road carnage at Ore, Ondo State, which saw no fewer than 16 people killed. Though dead, over a dozen of the victims were roasted.

Mr. Nwosisi said he had been a driver with over 25 years experience and had spent a large part of his life on the roads. He had witnessed a series of accidents in his career but none compared to what he saw last Wednesday at Ore.

Listen to him: "Not even the ones with hearts of stone could afford not to weep at Ore on Wednesday. Imagine seeing a vehicle ahead of you take a diversion. And next thing you hear is a big bang and the vehicle which was a few meters away is crushed like an egg. And what about the passengers in the belly of the bus? They are all still and silent.

"At some point, I imagined that I could have been one of the victims. And just when some of us summoned courage and rushed to pull out four dead bodies from the mangled bus, a deafening explosion went off. Then a mystery fire descended, sending everyone scampering for safety. And from a reasonable distance, we watched with trepidation as the bus and the remains of the victims burnt in the ensuing inferno. It was one gory scene too many," he recalled still sounding incoherent.

Mr. Nwosisi said the accident occurred at about some 20 kilometers on Ore-Sagamu Road at about 11am. The ill fated vehicle was a passenger, sprinter bus; it was the one many prefer to call Hummer bus. It had the inscription 'God is Good' on it. It was bound for Lagos, but no one could tell at that time where it took off from. It had a head-on collision with a heavy-duty truck belonging to a cement manufacturing firm. The truck was pressing for Benin City.

He said the passenger bus suddenly went up in flames and immediately roasted the rest of the dead passengers who could not be pulled out. A six-month old baby who until the incident occurred was nesting in the arms of its mother was said to be in the number.

Seeing what happened, sympathisers, bystanders, motorists and travelers all began to wail and weep.

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They hurriedly pulled over for a possible rescue mission. But they later hampered and had to helplessly watch the passenger burn in inferno. The explosion which caused the fire was suspected to have come from the bus' fuel-tanker. Subsequent explosions occurred as the tires and other inflammable materials made contact with the fire, further hampering the rescue operation as the rest of the passengers who might still have life in them moaned and groaned in excruciating pains in their very last moment. Mr. Nwosisi recalled that the bodies that were rescued before the bus began to burn were laid at some points on the road.

He further recalled that "immediately the bus collided with the truck, it tumbled with its roof on the ground;

with the assistance of people around.

"I believe some of them who were silent while we were struggling to rescue them might have fainted or were suffering server shock.

However, the few we were able to pull out had deep cuts on their skulls and other parts of their bodies.

"It was a big struggle we put up to see if we could disengage the mangled parts of the bus and rescue the victims alive. It was a big struggle because this was one disaster no one bargained for. No one prepared for it; so we were more or less using our bare hands to see what we could do to help.

"It was not surprising that the passengers were still and silent. It was an indication that majority of them were either dead or became unconscious when the incident happened. So when the fire broke out, we ran for safety. We could only watch the incident from a distance. My body was covered with goose-pimple as we heard sounds of other explosions while the bus and the bodies burnt."

Mr. Nwosisi said the mishap occurred at a road diversion. Because of the ongoing rehabilitation on that road, motorists are forced to divert to the opposite lanes most of the time. He said the accident could have been avoided, noting that over-speeding and recklessness might have contributed to the mishap.

"Traffic is often diverted by the contractor working on that road. The accident occurred at the point Lagos-bound traffic was diverted to the opposite direction. The driver of the bus, it seemed overtook another vehicle, but could not complete the task before it running unto the oncoming truck. Apparently realising that trouble was ahead, the driver might have further accelerated to escape the danger. But it appeared that the approaching truck was faster. If only the truck driver had slowed down to let him have his way, the disaster probably could not have happened. That was how the two vehicles ran into each other. Of course, the truck was bigger and stronger and had to crush the bus."

Daily Sun gathered that the truck driver too was fatally wounded in the accident. But there was no further account of him and his conductor if ever he had any.

Our correspondent learnt that most motorists who arrived at the scene complained that many truck drivers plying the road were often too careless. They said they were in the habit of bullying other motorists and forcing them off the road most of the time.

Mr. Nwosisi recalled that an unidentified motorist said that "the truck driver could have starved off the ugly incident by either slowing down or swerving into the walk way.'

He noted that as a driver too, he believed the truck driver could have swerved to the untarred portion of the walk way to avoid the head-on collision which had now resulted into massive loss of lives. He said it was proper for him to have done that as there could have been little danger in doing.

He recalled that it took close to 40 minutes before some Customs officials could arrive at the scene. After that some officials of Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) also raced to the scene. It was thereafter that the charred remains of the victims were pulled out of the ill-fated bus and then taken to the mortuary.

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M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						
« Jul						