


## SALLAH TRAGEDY: 19 die in Edo road accident

- **Policeman, 2 others killed as truck rams into worshippers in Ogun**
- **Protests as 3 motorcyclists die in road mishap**

It was wailing and lamentation in Benin, the Edo State capital yesterday as 19 persons, including little children were crushed to death in a road accident, which occurred at Isi village near Ugoneki community in Uhunmwode Local Government Area of the state.

Similarly, it was reported that a truck also rammed into scores of Muslim worshippers at an Eid praying ground, killing two people on the spot and a policeman, Joseph Adejumo, in Ijebu-Igbo, Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. **In the same vein, three commercial motorcyclists popularly called okada were on Thursday night killed by suspected motorists in Okitipupa in Okitipupa Local Government Area of Ondo State.**

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However, Saturday Telegraph gathered that the high level of casualties in the Edo State carnage had jolted residents living along the Isi village road, off the Benin-Agbor Road. It was learnt that the ugly incident which involved a commercial bus with registration number, ABD 206 XA, and an articulated truck marked DRZ347 XA, happened at about 5pm on Thursday.

Findings revealed that the commercial bus was heading to Auchi, headquarters of Etsako West council area of the state when it had a head-on collision with the articulated truck also heading to the ancient capital City of Benin which was also laden with livestock. Sixteen passengers traveling in the ill fated commercial bus died on the spot following heavy impact the crash which tore the bus into wreckage.

Three of those injured later gave up the ghost while eight other victims who sustained severe injuries are presently receiving treatment at the Aigbogun Clinic in Abudu, headquarters of Orhionmwon council area where they were rushed to. Among the dead were members of a family travelling for the Eid-el-Kabir celebration.

The state's Public Relations Officer of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Mr. George Otoaviokhai, who confirmed the incident, said the driver of the bus had attempted to overtake another vehicle in front of it when it lost control and rammed into the truck, coming in opposite direction. Otoaviokhai described the crash as avoidable, adding that it happened due to dangerous overtaking on the part of the driver of the commercial bus.

He said: "There was a vehicle in front of the bus; the bus was trying to overtake; that was not even needed. The accident was avoidable." On the tragedy that struck in Ijebu-Igbo, it was gathered that Adejumo had lost his life in the incident while trying to rescue the driver of the ill-fated truck from a mob. Saturday Telegraph gathered that scores of people sustained various degrees of injury in the accident which happened at the Oke Alaafia Eid Praying Ground, Ijebu-Igbo. Our correspondent learnt that the driver of a Bedford truck with registration number AA 523 JGB, which was laden with logs, lost control apparently due to brake failure.

The Public Relations Officer (PRO), Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps (TRACE), Babatunde Akinbiyi, who confirmed the incident, said the truck initially hit a Toyota Thundra with number plate APP 995 DD, damaged it before running over two children at the praying ground and killing them instantly. According to him, scores of other Muslim faithful who had come for the Eid prayer sustained injuries.

Miffed by the incident, Akinbiyi said a mob attempted to lynch the truck driver and in the melee that ensued, a policeman that was trying to rescue him was killed. He added that an operative of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) at the scene was also injured.

He said: “Our operatives said the truck ran over two children at the praying ground this morning, killing them instantly and injuring scores of others. “An operative of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps was among those who sustained injuries.

A policeman also died while being rushed to the hospital.” Akinbiyi said the corpses of the victims had been deposited at the mortuary of General Hospital, Ijebu- Igbo, while the injured were also rushed to the same hospital for treatment.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Abimbola said the slain policeman, Joseph Adejumo, a corporal, was an orderly to the Divisional Police Officer, Ijebu Igbo. Oyeyemi, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, also confirmed the death of two persons, adding that investigation was ongoing in the incident. He, however, said the driver of the truck and two suspects among the mob had been arrested.

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The police spokesman, who described the incident as appalling, told our correspondent that those arrested would soon be charged to court for murder. He said: “It is true that an accident occurred this morning at Ijebu Ode.

The truck laden with logs had lost control after its brake failed and rammed into Muslim faithful going to perform Eid prayer in Ijebu Igbo, it killed two people. “A mob had gathered and wanted to lynch the truck driver but policemen on ground prevented them but they descended on our operatives and one of them was killed.

“We have the truck driver in our custody and two other suspects. The suspects will be charged to court for murder.” Meanwhile, the death of the three commercial motorcyclists led protests by commercial motorcyclists who took to the streets protesting the killing of their colleagues. The three persons who were said to be commercial motorcyclists were killed but yet to be identified motorist beside the State General Hospital, Okitipupa.

Sources said the unidentified man drove a Toyota Picnic bus and was heading towards the hospital when he hit the three men who were on a motorcycle. The trio including a rider and two of his passengers were said to have died instantly.

He said: “The three men on the motorcycle were drunk and the rider was riding the motorcycle recklessly. So, they crossed the vehicle going to the hospital, the bus hit them and killed the three of them on the bike. The three persons were later identified as members of the okada riders association in Okitipupa.”

As a result of the development the commercial riders, according to the source mobilized themselves to the scene and burnt down the bus. The driver of the bus was said to have fled the scene immediately after the incident for fear of being lynched.

The Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the state’s Police Command, Mr. Femi Joseph, confirmed the incident and said the men of the command had been deployed in the area to restore normalcy.

He said: “It was a case of an accident, the three persons on the Okada lost their lives in the accident and their colleagues were protesting but our men are already there to calm down the situation.” Joseph, however, noted that there was no arrest made so far on the incident.

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