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**METRO AND CRIME**

# New Year tragedy: Trailer kills pre woman, 19 others



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**... armed robbers, auto crashes claim 14 in Ondo**

Sympathisers wept profusely on New Year's Eve as a trailer crushed 20 people, among them a pregnant woman, to death at the Second Gate of the New Gbagi International Market off the Ibeju-Lekki Expressway, Lagos, Oyo State.

About 15 others suffered varying degrees of injury when the trailer rammed into commercial buses.

Also on New Year's Eve, 14 people were killed by armed robbers and auto crashes in parts of Ondo State.

The pregnant woman was identified as Mrs. Funmilayo, who was said to be on her way to visit her in-laws. She died two days after moving to her new house with her family.

The accident occurred about 11.40p.m. as the trailer going from Ibeju-Lekki axis towards the New Gbagi International Market lost control, rammed into the commercial buses on the road, as well as, a Toyota Camry and a Nissan Micra.

The accident led to gridlock which lasted till early yesterday morning.

Sources said many of the victims caught in the accident included those going to the church for the crossover night service at Ibeju-Lekki and Egbeda areas.

Both the state commands of the police and the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) confirmed the accident but gave conflicting casualty figures. The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Adekunle Ajisebutu, puts the casualty figure at 11, while the state FRSC Spokesperson, Mrs. Cecilia Alao, said 12 people died. Bodies of the victims were deposited at the morgue of Oyo State Specialist Hospital, Adeoyo.

Investigation showed that aside those who died on the spot, three others died yesterday morning out of the 10 injured who were conveyed to Toun Specialist Hospital, Ibeju-Lekki for medical attention.

A middle-age man, Waris Olatunde, said that a bus belonging to his boss, identified as 'Baba Welder,' had loaded passengers at the spot and when it was about to move, a trailer from Ibeju-Lekki axis crossed the road and crushed the bus among others.

Olatunde, who claimed to be the conductor of the bus, said, "it was only God that saved me. I used to collect money for him from the passengers before he leaves the park. But yesterday

said since it was late already, I should take N200 and leave.

“He told me that he would collect the money himself on the road. The man just closed door of the vehicle and before he entered from the driver side, the trailer had crossed side and killed everyone in the vehicle. Even a Toyota Camry and Nissan Micra car were crushed.”

Another witness, who claimed to be a neighbour of the deceased pregnant woman, M Iseoluwa Opeyemi, explained that the woman popularly called Mama Funmilayo was way to her mother-in-law's house at Iyana-Agbala area of the state when the incident occurred.

She said: “Mama Funmi was a very hardworking woman. They just moved to their new last Saturday and she died last night. She came to our house and told us she was going to her mother-in-law's house, not knowing that she was going to die. Her only surviving son from the crash is now at the hospital. I was there this morning and the boy was recuperating, but he had a head injury. I pray the little boy survives this.”

The FRSC Sector Commander, Alao, said in the “Road Traffic Crash Report,” the command recorded a fatal (multiple) road traffic crash on Monday 31st December 2018 by 11.45 AM at KM3 Gbagi, on Ibadan-Ife highway.

She said: “Three vehicles with the following details were involved in the crash: DAF 8000, red colour (no registration), Toyota Camry saloon, gold colour with registration number 672 CG) and Toyota Hiace, white colour with registration number MUS 171 XF.

“A total of 19 people were involved in the crash consisting of 10 male adults, eight female adults and one male child.

“As at the time of conclusion of rescue operations, nine victims were confirmed dead and their corpses deposited at the morgue of Oyo State Specialist Hospital, Adeoyo while 10 injured victims were conveyed to Toun Specialist Hospital, Iwo Road area for medical attention.

“Subsequent hospital follow up conducted by the Command on Tuesday 1st January, suggests that an additional three victims have also died making the total fatality figure consisting of eight male adults, three female adults and one male child while seven injured victims made up of two male adults and five female adults are still on admission, receiving treatment.

“Preliminary investigation suggests that brake failure resulting in loss of control is the causative factor of the road traffic crash.”

In Ondo State, seven people were killed while several others were injured when suspected armed robbers invaded Uso-Owo Expressway in Owo Local Government Area on New Year's Eve.

Similarly, seven people died in auto accidents which occurred at Ajowa in Akoko North-West Local Government and Ore-Benin Expressway in Odigbo Local Government Area.

The attack by the suspected armed robbers cum kidnappers, sources said, was in retaliation for the invasion of kidnappers' den by security agencies last week.

A witness said suspected armed robbers, who were of Fulani extraction, were dressed in military uniforms and invaded the Owo-Akure Road notorious for kidnapping and robbery and stopped motorists sporadically in order to force motorists to stop.

The witness said two persons on motorcycle were killed instantly by the bullets of the hoodlums while many others were injured.

Four of those who sustained gunshot injuries were brought in dead to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Owo.

One of those killed, Fatai Awosusi, was on his way to Ipeme to celebrate the New Year's Eve when he was killed by the armed robbers.

Awosusi died at the University of Medical Sciences (UNIMED) Teaching Hospital in Owo, while another victim died at the Specialist Hospital, Akure.

Another witness, who is a lecturer in the Department of Languages, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO), Dr. Ayodele, said she and other travellers were saved miraculously on New Year's Eve from kidnappers on the dreaded Akure-Owo Road.

The incident occurred between Uso and Ogbese axis of the road.

Some of the victims who suffered gunshot wounds were said to have been rushed to the hospitals.

Kidnapping has been on the increase in the axis in recent times even leading to the death of a lecturer in the polytechnic.

Since then, government has beefed up security on the road with police stationed at strategic places.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Femi Joseph, who confirmed the said three persons were confirmed dead.

Joseph said the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) who supposed to post people to the area had been queried while the policemen who supposed to be on duty had been detained for dereliction of duties.

Meanwhile, two persons died, while three others sustained various degrees of injury in a motor accident which occurred at Ajowa in Akoko North-West Local Government Area.

The accident, a witness said, involved a J5-bus heading to the northern part of the state which loaded kolanuts and palm oil.

The Commandant of FRSC, Ikare-Akoko Unit, Jimoh Basiru, said the accident occurred at midnight near a military checkpoint in the town.

A witness said a soldier on duty quickly invited his colleagues to rescue the accident victims.

The FRSC commandant said his men immediately went into action, rescued the victims from the wreckage of the vehicle and rushed them to the State Specialist Hospital, Ikare-Akoko. Basiru attributed the accident to recklessness and night journey.

The Chief Medical Director (CMD), State Specialist Hospital, Ikare-Akoko, Dr. Wale Oguntuase, confirmed that two persons were brought in dead and were now in the mortuary. He added that three others were receiving treatment at the emergency ward of the hospital.

Four persons were burnt to death while others sustained injuries in the second accident which occurred on the Ore-Benin Expressway in Odigbo Local Government Area.

A bus, with registration number MNY 406 XA, according to sources, was carrying eight passengers, four of who died while the remaining sustained injuries.

It was learnt that the Toyota Hiace bus was reportedly coming from Lagos and heading to Benin.

One of the sources said the bus had a burst tyre, which made it to summersault several times before catching fire. Four of the occupants were burnt.

The state FRSC Sector Commander, Mr. Rotimi Adeleye, said the vehicle's tyre got da before it summersaulted while on motion.

Adeleye added that the deceased had been taken to a hospital in Ore.

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