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Entire Family, 20 Others Die in Fatal Accident

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FRSC officials at accident scene

Okon Bassey in Uyo

Tragedy struck weekend in Akwa Ibom State as a man, his wife and all their children, as well as more than 20 others, all members of the Jehovah's Witness Church, perished in a fatal road accident which occurred, Friday, along the Utu Etim Ekpo road in Etim Ekpo

Local Government Area of the state.

Forty other members of the church sustained varying degrees of injuries following in the crash which occurred on their way to the Jehovah's Witness annual convention ground in Ikot Ekpene Local Government area of the state.

THISDAY's gathered that more than 70 members of the church had hired a lorry to convey them from Ukanafun Local Government Area to Ikot Ekpene for the annual district convention which began on Friday and billed to end today (Sunday) but the journey ended half way with many members of the church dying on the road in the accident.

Eyewitnesses alleged that the driver of the lorry conveying the church members to the venue of the convention lost control of the vehicle when he got to Utu Etim Ekpo, the junction opposite the local government secretariat, and hit the stone used to construct the roundabout, thus resulting in the lorry sommersaulting, leaving many of its passengers and others wounded.

The corpses and those injured in the accident were said to have been taken to neighbouring hospitals and mortuaries.

One of the eyewitnesses, Mr. Friday John, said the people who died may have been more than what was seen because a whole family including parents and their children were all trapped in the accident.

"We were all here discussing when suddenly the lorry appeared and was looking like the driver had lost control of it. Then the lorry drove straight and hit the stone and sommersaulted into the gutter.

"Many people died, more than 18. In fact, we couldn't count the number because there were many corpses, including husband, wife and children and they were all taken to the mortuary in various hospitals near Etim Ekpo here," John explained.

In another narration, a Secondary School teacher in Eka Uruk Eshiet Etim Ekpo, Mr. Ndipmo Nkanta, said the lorry boarded by the deceased and the injured passengers was not meant for passengers but goods only.

He blamed the accident on poverty, arguing that if there was a better alternative, such casualties wouldn't have been recorded, especially as they were going to worship God.

The Public Relations Officer of the Federal Road Safety Corps, FRSC, in the state, Mr. Godsgift Uwen, blamed the incident on over-speeding and overloading by the driver of the lorry.

He said the lorry was not supposed to carry any passenger as it was meant for goods only but the driver stubbornly used it as a passenger's vehicle, which led to the sad incident.

He advised against rush and drunken driving, especially in the yuletide, noting that these are some of the major causes of accidents on the roads.

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