

## FG probes Niger tanker explosion as death toll hits 86



**By Victor Ahiuma-Young, Wole Mosadomi, Johnbosco Agbakwuru&Emmanuel Elebeke**

**The Federal government has set up a committee of stakeholders to unravel the remote and immediate cause of Saturday's Petrol Tanker accident at Dikko Junction, Dikko-Maje Minna road, Gurara Local Government, LGA, Niger State.**

**While the death toll yesterday rose to 86, 55 other persons were confirmed injured and 80 corpses were recovered and given mass burial at Dikko Primary Health Center premises.**

**Among the stakeholders that made up the investigative committee are the Ministry of Information and National Orientation, of Humanitarian Affairs, National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA, the Standard Organisation of Nigeria, SON, the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, IPMAN, and Petroleum Tanker Drivers' BTD, among other relevant stakeholders.**

**Tanker Drivers, PTD, among other relevant stakeholders.**

**The committee is expected to come up with a recommendation to end such tragedies.**

**The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, announced this when he led a Federal Government delegation to condole the Emir of Suleija, HRH. Sarkin Zazzau, Suleija, Mohammed Akwwal and his subjects over the tragic tanker accident.**

**Addressing the Emir in his palace, the Minister said the Federal Government was saddened by the ugly incident that claimed 84 lives in Suleija, and similar tanker explosions that occurred between September 2024 and now, all claiming over 265 lives.**

**He said “The President has directed that we come here to condole with our Father, His Royal Highness, and all his senior councillors here present, and indeed the entire people of Suleija and Niger State, over this very unfortunate incident that occurred yesterday. The President is really saddened by what has happened, and he is worried to the extent that he has said that a high-powered committee will be set up to look at these incidents.**

**“In the last couple of months, from September to this time, we have had four of these major incidences. We had the first one between Ibadan and Ife, where a tanker exploded. Five houses and cars and other vehicles were touched. Almost a day after here in Niger State, in Agai, about 48 persons lost their lives. This was on the 8th of September. The preceding year, 2024, 48 people lost their lives. Not long afterwards, on the 15th of October, again in 2024, about 144 people also lost their lives in Niger State in a similar incident. And now, only yesterday (Saturday), here at Diko Junction, within this emirate, 86 people have lost their lives.**

**“Now, if you put that together, you will see that over 265 people have so far lost their lives in this kind of incident. This is really very worrying. The government is very worried about it, and as a result of that, has set up a committee comprising the Ministry of Information and National Orientation, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, other critical stakeholders like NEMA, like Standard Organization of Nigeria, like the Petroleum Tanker Drivers Association, IPMAN, and all other stakeholders to come together to find the remote and immediate causes of this, and how to avert the occurrence or the reoccurrence of this as we move on.**

**“Mr. President is really very saddened by this, and is determined to bring to an end this kind of occurrence. And as a result of that, he has directed the National Orientation Agency under my ministry to step up an enlargement campaign and education of people.**

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**“You cannot just have tankers, by whatever reason, involved in an accident, and then people rushing to the site to scoop this petroleum product, PMS. It is absolutely wrong. It has led to the loss of lives of hundreds of people, and government will not allow this to happen again. As a result of that, this high committee will now make recommendations to government with a view to finding a lasting solution to this issue. But we call on the general public, and we want to use the traditional institution, especially the Royal Father, to enlighten the public that it is wrong when a tanker finds itself in an accident, for people to rush to that scene with the intention of scooping products from that scene.”**

#### **Tinubu mourns**

**Meanwhile, President Bola Tinubu has advised Nigerians to avoid accident sites, especially those involving fuel-laden vehicles, due to their highly explosive nature. The President also expressed deep sorrow over the fuel tanker explosion, which caused the death of over 80 people, with many also injured.**

**President Tinubu in a statement by his spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, mourned the victims and expressed his condolences to the families affected, as well as to the government and people of Niger State.**

He underscored the tragic and preventable nature of the incident, as many victims were those scooping Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from the overturned tanker. According to the statement: “The President has directed the provision of comprehensive medical care to the injured and instructed security and road safety authorities to implement measures to avert similar incidents.

“President Tinubu strongly advises all citizens to exercise caution and avoid approaching accident sites, especially those involving fuel-laden vehicles, due to their highly explosive nature.

“Additionally, the President has mandated the National Orientation Agency to initiate a nationwide educational campaign. This campaign will raise public awareness about the severe risks and environmental dangers of scooping fuel from fallen tankers.”

#### **Buhari laments**

Also, former President Muhammadu Buhari expressed disappointment about Nigerians’ refusal to heed warnings from authorities over fallen petrol tankers.

In a statement by his media aide, Garba Shehu, condoled with victims’ families and the Government of Niger State.

The statement reads: “Former President Muhammadu Buhari has expressed his heartfelt condolences on the loss of lives in a fire following another petroleum tanker accident that occurred on Saturday at Dikko Junction on the Abuja-Kaduna highway in Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State.

“He expressed disappointment that the practice of scooping up fuel is becoming more common in spite of warnings from the authorities and the devastating losses of life that had characteristically attended such incidents.

#### **Shettima saddened over loss of lives**

Reacting, Vice President Kashim Shettima, expressed sadness over the loss of several lives in the accident.

In the statement by his spokesman, Stanley Nkwocha, Senator Shettima extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, as well as the government and people of Niger State.

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His message followed President Bola Tinubu's earlier directive for immediate medical assistance to survivors and the implementation of stricter safety protocols along major highways.

The incident, which occurred when a fuel-laden tanker en route from Kaduna to Gwagwalada overturned at Dikko Junction, has prompted the federal government to announce a comprehensive review of transportation safety measures.

The President has also tasked the National Orientation Agency with launching an immediate nationwide awareness campaign on the dangers of approaching accident scenes involving fuel tankers.

#### **NUPENG blames bad road**

On its part, the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, NUPENG, expressed its grief over the tragic accident and extended its condolences to the families, friends, communities and the people of the state.

In a statement by its President and General Secretary, Prince Williams Akporeha and Afolabi Olawale, respectively, NUPENG pleaded with the federal and state governments to repair the road network, especially the major highways to reduce such avoidable accidents.

**NUPENG's statement reads "The leadership and members of NUPENG extend our heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, and communities affected by the tragic petroleum truck accident at Dikko Junction, Gurara Local Government, Niger State, on Saturday 18th, January 2025.**

**"We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives, the destruction of properties, and the injuries sustained by many in this devastating incident. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their loved ones during this traumatic and challenging time.**

**"The Union takes this opportunity to urgently appeal to the Federal government to repair bad roads to prevent such incidents and to intensify efforts in sensitizing the public about the dangers of scooping fuel from accidental situations of petroleum trucks on highways.**

**"As a responsible organization, NUPENG collaborates annually with relevant agencies, including the Federal Road Safety Corps, the Police, and State Traffic Management agencies, to train our drivers on road safety. The Union is committed to continuously training and retraining our members on best driving and safety practices.**

**"We stand in solidarity with the affected families and the entire Dikko community in Niger State. We commend the emergency responders who bravely extinguished the fire and rescued many injured victims.**

**"We urge all relevant authorities to provide the necessary support and medical care to those injured and to take measures to prevent future tragedies. May the souls of the departed rest in peace, and may their families find the strength to bear these irreparable losses."**

### **First lady grieves**

**Also, wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu has expressed grief over the death of several Nigerians in the Niger State.**

**The First Lady in a statement yesterday condoled with the Niger State Governor, Mohammed Umar Bago, the families and loved ones of the departed souls, the injured and the entire people of the state.**

**She said: “I received with sadness the news of the fuel tanker explosion which occurred on Saturday, 18th January at the Dikko Junction, Niger state where several lives were lost and many sustained injuries.” “I condole with the Governor, His Excellency Mohammed Umar Bago, the families and loved ones of the departed souls, the injured and the entire people of Niger State.”**