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## Tears as 40 persons roast to death in multiple auto crash

[Headlines](#) Aug 15, 2010

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By Evelyn Usman and Ifeanyi Okolie

LAGOS—IT was a black Sunday for several families in Lagos, yesterday, as no fewer than 40 persons allegedly perished in a multiple auto crash that occurred at a police check point near Otedola Housing Estate, a few metres away from Berger area on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.



The crash occurred after a trailer that was allegedly trying to evade Police arrest rammed into a stationary vehicle at the police check point and exploded.

The accident which occurred at about 12 noon, left over 19 vehicles including four commercial buses burnt beyond recognition while several people sustained varying degrees of burns.

The incident led to a massive gridlock, as vehicle plying the route pulled to a stop, for fear of being caught by the inferno.

Eyewitnesses who blamed the police for the accident, said the buses were fully loaded. Lateef Ajala, who said he witnessed the incident, said: "See wetin police have caused because of N50," adding that some 25 vehicles were involved in the multiple accident.

Ajala said the police had stopped some cars and buses on the bridge when a speeding trailer hit one of the vehicles from behind.

The fire created panic among motorists who hit other cars while trying to escape.

#### Stationary vehicle

Another eyewitness who gave his name as Muiyiwa Adewale, a roadside mechanic, told Vanguard that the driver of the ill-fated trailer which was carrying sugar, disobeyed orders from policemen at the check point, and rammed into a stationary vehicle waiting to be cleared by the police. He said the trailer exploded instantly.

The witness said that flames from the exploded truck spread to other vehicles on the queue, and that it caught up with two fully-loaded Toyota Urvan commercial buses, leaving all its passengers burnt completely.

Area H Police Commander, Mr. Godwin Nwobodo, an assistant commissioner of police, who was at the scene, however, told Vanguard that "over 20 people were killed."

Firefighters from both the Federal Fire Service, Lagos State Fire Service and others from corporate organizations were at the scene to put off the inferno. Also at the scene were policemen from the Lagos State Police Command, officials of Federal Road Safety Commission, FRSC, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, LASTMA, etc.

The Lagos State Police spokesman, Frank Mba, who could not confirm the exact numbers of lives lost and vehicles burnt, said policemen, officials of the FRSC and LASTMA were at the scene to clear the debris to pave way for the free-flow of traffic.

Mba said: "The correct figure of total lives lost would be ascertained after the debris have been removed."

He also dismissed as false, claims that a police check-point on the high way caused the crash, stressing: "I went to the accident scene myself. I also interviewed people and they said they did not see any policeman around the area.

They said they saw the driver screaming and throwing out his hand saying, 'break don fail oh! Break don fail oh!!' And that place is a slope. We don't block the road in Lagos State. What we have is just stop-and-search, and at the time of the incident, there was none there."

However, Vanguard Editor, Mr. Miden Bayagbon, who drove past the scene shortly before the accident occurred, confirmed seeing the police road block. He said: “What immediately struck my attention was the unusual way the police used their van to vertically block two lanes of the expressway leaving only one lane free.

“I had expressed my worry to my wife, who was in the car with me, that what the police were doing was capable of causing a major accident.”

Angered by the incident, street urchins, popularly called Area Boys, made bonfires on the Ibadan-Lagos section of the expressway and the streets leading to Omole Estate and Sir Michael Otedola Housing Estate. The police, however, shot in the air to dispel the youths.