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How 22 people died along TinCan Port corridor

over extortion • Truckers decry multinational dominance of haulage business

Stories by **Steve Agbota**
stvenchy@yahoo.com
08033302331

CORRUPTION has become an integral norm at Lagos ports and all efforts to curb the menace by authorities at various levels seem to have failed.

Extortion and brutality of truckers have become a game played by both state and non-state actors along the port corridors.

Investigations have so far revealed that no less than 22 people were allegedly killed in 2022 following their refusal to give bribe to both government and non-government actors operating along the port corridors.

This is even as proliferation of checkpoints and other illegal activities have continued, while perpetrators are rarely brought to book.

For instance, it has been confirmed that there are 50 checkpoints for extortion around Mile 2, Sunrise, Coconut, TinCan Port second gate, Kirikiri, FATGBEMS, Badagry Express Road and inside Amuwo Odofin, Ijora Olopa and Costain.

At these checkpoints mounted by security personnel, state and non-state actors, truck drivers are extorted between N2, 000 and N10, 000 daily.

The Managing Director, Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Muhammed Bello-Koko, also confirmed that no less than 30 toll-points for extortion had sprung up around the Apapa and Tin Can ports.

Stakeholders are worried that despite the NPA, Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC) and Lagos State government partnership to checkmate the illegal checkpoints mounted around Lagos ports corridor, none of the perpetrators have been arrested or prosecuted.

There has been cases where security operatives assigned to monitor traffic along port corridors would watch miscreants stop trucks and demand money. It is often the refusal to part with money at these illegal checkpoints that usually lead to fights among security personnel, miscreants and truck drivers.



• Security personnel addressing truck drivers in Apapa

In most cases however, it is the truck drivers and motorboys that usually lose their lives to such clashes.

The recent one was a driver's motorboy that was killed by Police and LASTMA officials on top of Total bridge along Apapa port access road.

The incident happened when the Police and LASTMA officials controlling traffic stopped the truck driver along with the motor-boy and asked the driver to pay N500 which the driver refused to pay.

The refusal to give them the N500 resulted in a fight. The motor-boy was beaten by Police and LASTMA until he fell under a trailer and was crushed to death.

At an enlarged meeting of the Presidential Task Team (PSIT) held at the Nigerian Shippers Council in Apapa Lagos recently, the Council of Maritime Transport Unions and Associations (COMTUA) alleged that in 2022 alone, an estimated 22 persons were killed along the Tin Can Port corridor due to extortion of truckers and fight for territory among various unions.

This is even as association raised the alarm over the gradual extinction of indigenous businesses in the trucking business in the Nigerian maritime sector.

A maritime stakeholder Mr. Aroyehun, lamented for instance that multinational companies including Bollore, Medlock among others, have infiltrated and taken

over trucking business with large number of fleets, thereby throwing the indigenous operators into unemployment market.

Breaking down the death rate, he said: "At Tin Can Ports sometimes in July 2022, four people were killed in a supremacy battle for territory between Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) and Parks and Garages Management Committee.

"This matter was reported to the port police command, state command, AIG and so on, and up till now, nobody is near the investigation, talk less of prosecution.

"At Mile 2 in 2022, 17 people were killed in territory and supremacy battle and nobody was prosecuted up till now," he said.

According to him, at Trade Fair, a driver was killed because of N1,000 extortion by touts who struggled for the steering wheel with him and the extortion point is still there.

Aroyehun noted that the port corridor into Apapa and Tin Can Port is now free of traffic because there are no cargoes to lift from the port as truckers have sold their trucks.

"It is not only the efforts of PSIT that has freed the port corridors, we are no longer in business, our members have sold their trucks. If you need a truck going from Tin Can Port to Agbara for N180,000, when you buy diesel and so on, you have to give N30,000 to the driver because of the

area boys on the roads.

"The VIO has prosecuted us and they are tired. Each time you fix your headlamps, it would be broken again by these boys. Our trucks are now rickety, destroyed by these hoodlums and the money to fix them is no longer there.

"We are not protected, the business that is supposed to be done by indigenous companies have been taken over by multinationals, you would see hundreds of trucks owned by foreigners, Bollore, Medlock and so on," he alleged.

Reacting to the recent killing of motorboy, the administration secretary, Association of Maritime Truck Owners of Nigeria (AMATO), Mohammed Sani, lamented incessant and indiscriminate extortion by security agencies stationed at the ports corridor to manage traffic congestion.

Conversely, he decried the multiple extortion experienced in the hands of those he described as maritime bandits along the port corridor.

"We don't have security and traffic control men along the ports corridors. What we have are just bunch of extortion bandits hiding under the guise of providing security and traffic control," he said.

He lamented that those in the trucking business in the country are suffering and going through a lot in the hands of security agencies and area boys.

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