



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Nigeria - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 23 & Friday 24 March 2017**

### **Information on the Abule Egba pipeline explosion on 26 December 2006**

A document released in December 2006 by *BBC News* states:

“At least 260 people have been killed and 60 injured in an oil pipeline blast in Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, Nigerian Red Cross (NRC) officials say” (BBC News (26 December 2016) *Lagos pipeline blast kills scores*).

In December 2006 the *Financial Times* notes that:

“Hundreds of people were yesterday burned to death in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, after a fuel pipeline that had been vandalised by thieves exploded. Officials said the pipeline blew up after residents of the nearby Abule Egba district started scooping fuel from the pipe, which had already burst open” (Financial Times (27 December 2006) *Hundreds die in Nigerian oil pipeline explosion*).

The *Associated Press* in December 2006 notes:

“Hundreds of bodies could be seen jumbled and fused together in the raging flames at the blast site. Intense heat kept rescue workers back as smoke billowed over the heavily populated Adule Egba neighborhood. The blast shook the neighborhood after dawn, Nigerian Red Cross spokesman Umar Mairiga said. He said 16 bodies had been taken to the morgue, but raging fires were hindering further recovery. Many people had been injured, he said. Nigerians often tap into pipelines carrying refined fuel, scooping up the raw product in buckets or plastic bags. Spilled fuel spreading in pools sometimes ignites, immolating people nearby” (Associated Press (26 December 2006) *Pipeline explosion in Lagos kills at least 200 people, Red Cross says*).

In December 2006 the *Agence France Presse* states in a document that:

“Residents said the pipeline was vandalised before dawn Tuesday by thieves stealing fuel on a large scale and using petrol tankers to drive it away. The fire, they said, started some time around 8:00 am (0700 GMT) the same day when local residents arrived with jerrycans to help themselves to small quantities of fuel” (Agence France Presse (27 December 2006) *Mass burial for victims of Nigerian oil pipeline blaze*).

The *Associated Press* in December 2006 notes that:

“Residents said a gang of thieves had been illegally tapping the pipeline for months, carting away gasoline in tankers for resale. Tapping is common in Nigeria, where many of the 130 million people live in woeful poverty amid widespread graft that makes a handful wealthy in this major oil exporter. A single pilfered can of gasoline sold on the black market can earn two weeks of wages for a poor Nigerian. But tapping also brings frequent accidents. Earlier this year, 150 people died in a similar explosion in Lagos, and a 1998 pipeline fire killed 1,500 in southern Nigeria.

Tuesday's blast, the worst in years, came after thieves opened the conduit during the night but left without fully sealing it, prompting hundreds of nearby residents to rush to collect spurting gasoline with cans, buckets and even plastic bags" (Associated Press (27 December 2006) *Fuel blast kills at least 260 Nigerians; Dead include poor mothers and children trying to collect gasoline at spill left by thieves*).

A publication issued in December 2016 by the *Guardian* states:

"More than 260 people were killed yesterday - burned alive when a ruptured oil pipeline burst into flames in Lagos. Crowds of local residents had gone to scoop up petrol using plastic containers after an armed gang punctured an underground pipeline to illegally siphon off fuel" (Guardian (27 December 2010) *Hundreds burned alive in Lagos pipeline fire*).

In December 2006 the *Daily Telegraph* notes:

"The explosion ripped through the city's northern Abule Egba district yesterday morning, as a scrum of residents were scrambling to collect the petrol pouring from the broken pipe. The blast started a fire which swept through the suburb's densely packed houses, destroying dozens of homes and cars, as well as a church, a mosque and a saw mill" (Daily Telegraph (27 December 2006) *260 killed in oil pipeline blast after fuel thefts*).

The *Inter Press Service* notes in December 2006 that:

"The pipelines are typically located in very poor suburbs" (Inter Press Service (27 December 2006) *Nigeria: Big-Time Oil Thieves Prosper As Poor Die In Pipeline Fire*).

The *Times* in December 2006 points out that:

"People from the densely populated Abule Egba neighbourhood were collecting spilt oil in plastic cans from a pipeline broken open by thieves when the blast set off a huge fire" (Times (27 December 2006) *Hundreds are burnt to death in oil pipe blast*).

A report issued by the *Agence France Presse* points out that:

"Local television stations speculated that a petrol shortage that has plagued much of Lagos for the past 10 days or so may have pushed the thieves to tap the pipeline in the hopes of making big profits by re-selling fuel on the black market" (Agence France Presse (27 December 2006) *Nigerian health workers disinfect pipeline blaze site, toll climbs to 269*).

In December 2016 *IRIN News* notes that:

"The pipeline exploded in the Abule Egba District of Lagos after it had been ruptured by what government officials describe as criminals gangs. At the time of the explosion hundreds of people were gathered around the leaking pipe scooping up fuel to sell illegally" (IRIN News (28 December 2006) *Nigeria: Emergency response to pipeline blast mostly a national affair*).

The *Agence France Presse* in December 2016 notes:

“The death toll in the oil pipeline fire in Nigeria's main city Lagos has risen to 284 after 15 more people succumbed to their injuries in hospital, medical authorities announced Friday. The last figure given out by the Red Cross was of 269 bodies counted at the scene of the disaster in a northern suburb of the city. Most of the victims received a mass burial early Wednesday. Plastic surgeon Idowu Feyebi at Lagos' university hospital said 25 critically ill victims were still being treated there. The pipeline was reportedly vandalised before dawn Tuesday by thieves stealing fuel on a large scale, using petrol tankers to drive it away. The pipeline exploded around 8:00 am (0700 GMT) as local residents arrived with jerrycans to help themselves to small quantities of fuel” (Agence France Presse (29 December 2006) *Death toll rises to 284 in Nigerian pipeline blast*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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