

# Kenyan oil pipeline explosion kills 120

AFP, Nairobi

At least 120 people were burned to death yesterday when a pipeline burst into flames in a Nairobi slum as local people were siphoning fuel from it, and more than 100 hospitalised, officials said.

Scores of bodies, some burned to the bone, lay on charred grass near trenches and a filthy river in the Sinai slum following the accident.

No official explanation had been given as to what caused the accident along the pipeline that runs through Sinai's tin shacks.

However, some residents said fuel siphoning in the slum was a common practice.

"It happens whenever the Kenya Pipeline (company) is pumping fuel ... we usually go to get fuel from there," said Francis Munge.

"The death toll from bodies counted so far is 120. It is likely to rise because of

the bodies in the river," said Philip Kisia, a Nairobi city council official.

Richard Lesiampe, the head of one of the country's main hospitals in Nairobi, said 109 people were being treated for burns.

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga expressed sympathy with the victims.

"It is a terrible, terrible situation. It is sad to see our people lose their lives like this," Odinga said as he toured the slum.

Many residents were caught up in the blaze, which started around 0530 GMT, and an AFP reporter at the scene counted scores of charred bodies around the scene.

"I have never seen this in my life. I have seen women and children burnt like firewood. The very worst was a woman burned with her baby on her back," another local resident, Francis Muendo, told AFP.

Some of those whose clothing and hair caught fire jumped into a nearby stream to try to extinguish the flames, but many succumbed to their injuries in the water. Police later placed a net across the stream to prevent the bodies from drifting away.

Mutinda said the last of the injured had now been evacuated and he and his colleagues were concentrating on "support and tracing services."

Houses close to the pipeline were also engulfed in flames, their tin roofs buckling and disintegrating and their badly burned residents evacuated for medical care.

Fuel leaks and oil tanker accidents in Africa often draw huge crowds scrambling to scoop fuel, resulting in many deaths due to accidental fires.

In 2009, 122 people were killed after a fire erupted while they were drawing fuel from an overturned tanker in western Kenya.

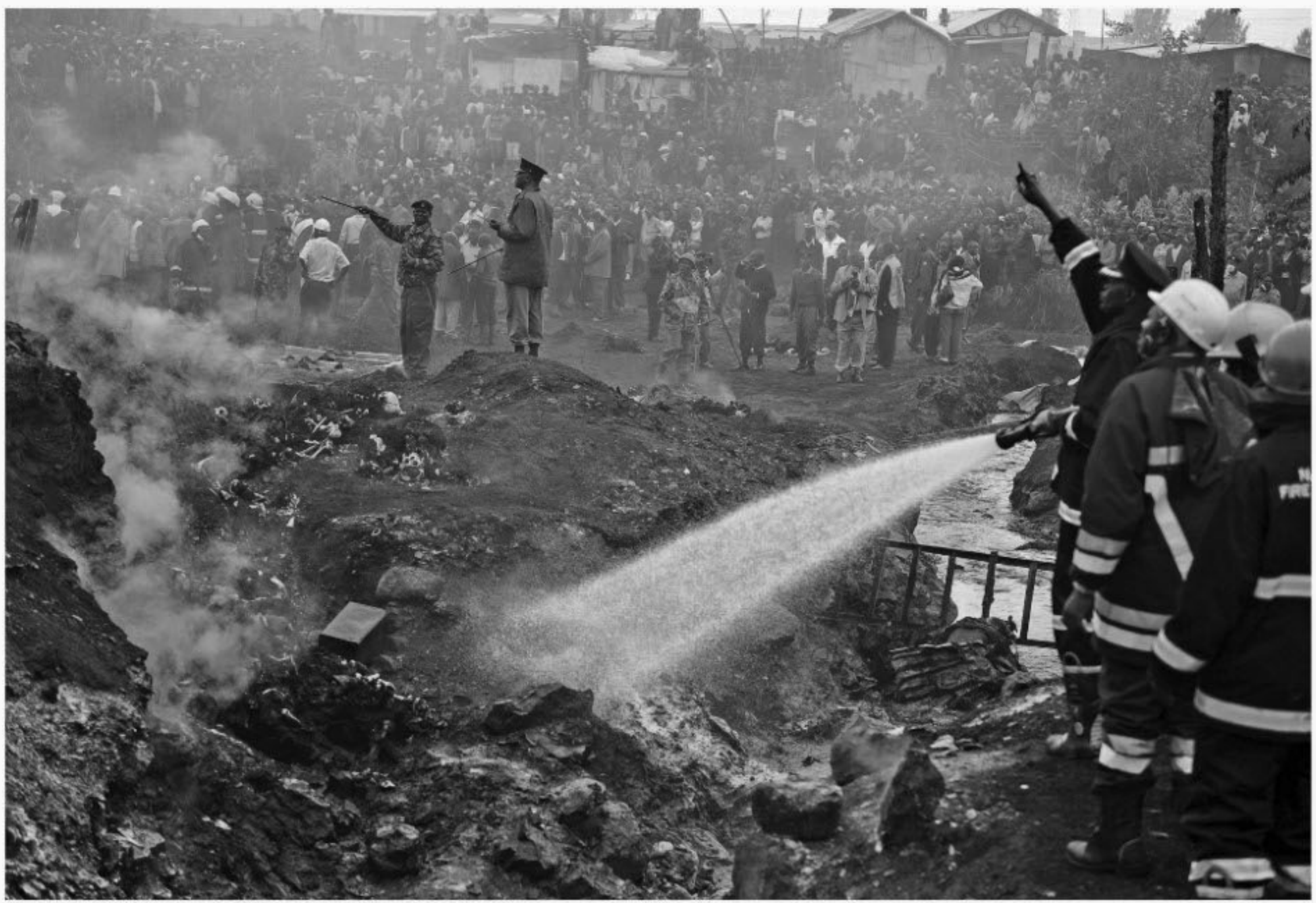


PHOTO: AFP

Firefighters and police officers gesture at the scene of a fierce fire yesterday following an explosion of a pipeline used to transport fuel that runs through a sprawling slum in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

## Japan names new trade minister



AFP, Tokyo

Yukio Edano, the face of Japan's government following the March tsunami and Fukushima nuclear crisis, was yesterday named as trade minister after his predecessor quit over controversial remarks.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda appointed Edano as the new minister for economy, trade and industry, replacing Yoshio Hachiro, who abruptly resigned late Saturday after a series of gaffes.

Edano, 47, a lawyer turned politician, was chief cabinet secretary in the previous government of Naoto Kan and became known for his tireless press conferences -- dressed in a blue emergency uniform -- following the disasters.

While Kan's government was widely condemned for its handling of the calamity, Edano's calm manner won him public admiration and praise on micro-blogging site Twitter as he rose to prominence.

In an early embarrassment for Japan's new government, Hachiro, 63, resigned Saturday after only eight days in the job over comments deemed insensitive to evacuees from crisis-hit Fukushima.

He provoked anger when he called the area around the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant a "shi no machi" or a "town of death".

## 32 of Gaddafi inner circle flee to Niger

*Fighting rages for last Gaddafi bastions*

AFP, Niamey

Thirty-two members of fugitive former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's inner circle, including his son Saadi, have arrived in Niger since September 2 as fighting rages for remaining Gaddafi bastions.

"A total of 32 people are now here, including one of (Gaddafi's) sons, Saadi, as well as three generals," Niger's Prime Minister Brigi Rafini said during a meeting with foreign diplomats in Niamey.

The arrivals had crossed the border in four separate groups over the last 10 days and had been taken in by Niger for "humanitarian reasons", the prime minister added.

Meanwhile, China yesterday formally recognised the National Transitional Council (NTC) as Libya's government.

The most recent arrivals included Saadi and eight other close associates of Gaddafi senior, added Rafini in comments carried out by public radio.

But Rafini said none of those known to have crossed over the border were being

sought by the Hague-based war crimes court.

NTC fighters on Sunday clashed with Gaddafi's forces at Bani Walid southeast of Tripoli and moved closer to the Mediterranean city of Sirte, the toppled autocrat's hometown.

Clashes erupted in the afternoon in Bani Walid neighbourhoods of Al-Mansila and Al-Hawasim, according to fighter Ahmed al-Warfalli, but military commanders insisted that the main assault had yet to begin.

By evening, ambulances were rushing to and from the front line, and an AFP reporter counted three fighters killed and 15 wounded. The fighters said they had lost as many as 10 men.

The NTC number two said on Sunday that a transitional government would be formed within 10 days.

Relations are particularly strained between Tripoli and the second-largest city Benghazi, which was the rebels' wartime base; and the third-largest city Misrata, which endured a prolonged siege by Gaddafi forces.

## Saleh nods to power transfer talks

AFP, Sanaa

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has authorised his deputy to negotiate a power transfer with the opposition, the state news agency SABA said yesterday, finally agreeing to a proposal by Gulf countries to put an end to a months-long political crisis.

Saleh, who has been absent from the country for more than three months, "has given the vice president Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi the necessary constitutional authority to negotiate" the power transfer mechanism with the opposition, SABA said.

The presidential decree authorises Hadi to sign on Saleh's behalf the so-called Gulf Initiative, which was proposed by the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and sets the path for a peaceful transition of power out of Saleh's hands.

Hadi can "agree on a time-frame... and sign" the agreement, according to the decree.

Saleh, who has ruled Yemen since 1978 and has been recovering in Saudi Arabia from a June 3 attack on his presidential compound, also authorised Hadi to begin preparations for early presidential elections to be carried out under regional and international supervision.

## 9/11 attacks inspired war of 'vengeance': US

AFP, Washington

US military and political leaders on Sunday paid solemn tribute to the victims of the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon and to troops who have waged a war of "vengeance" in the decade since.

"Lives ended in this place. Dreams were shattered. Futures were instantly altered. Hopes were tragically dashed," Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a ceremony marking the day a hijacked airliner slammed into the US military headquarters ten years ago.

Mullen, joined by Vice President Joe Biden and Defence Secretary Leon Panetta, said the attack inspired a new generation to join the armed forces as the country sought retribution against al-Qaeda militants.

"From this place of wrath and tears, America's military ventured forth as the long arm and clenched fist of an angry nation at war.

"And we have remained at war ever since, visiting upon our enemies the vengeance they were due and providing for the American people the common defence they demand," Mullen said.

As survivors and victims' families sat under a blistering sun, a Navy chorus sang "Amazing Grace" before troops from every branch of the military laid a wreath one-by-one at each marker for those killed in the attack.

The ceremony opened at about the same time American Airlines Flight 77, a hijacked Boeing 757, struck the Pentagon at 9:37am on the morning of September 11, 2001.

The attack, which caused a section of the western wing of the building to collapse in a cloud of black smoke, killed all 59 people aboard the plane and 125 people working at the Pentagon, along with the five hijackers.

The Pentagon ceremony came a day after a suicide bombing in Afghanistan that underscored the dangers of the grinding ten-year-old war there, where nearly 100,000 US troops remain deployed.

With 50 US soldiers wounded in Saturday's attack on a Nato combat post, Biden called the bombing in Wardak province "a stark and vivid reminder this war continues."

The September 11 attacks were a "declaration of war" by stateless extremists who believed they "could buckle our knees, could bend our will, could begin to break us and break our resolve," Biden said.

Instead, the hijackers awoke a "sleeping giant," he said.

## Leak risk after France nuke site blast

AFP, Nimes

A blast at a French nuclear site killed at least one person and injured four more yesterday, the state nuclear regulator said, as emergency services warned of a radiation leak threat.

National electricity provider EDF confirmed the initial death toll following the explosion at the Marcoule nuclear site in the Rhone Valley near the southern city of Nimes.

Later, France's ASN nuclear watchdog said there was no leak of radioactive material.

Marcoule is a nuclear waste management site that does not include any reactors. The explosion took place near a furnace, an ASN spokesman told Reuters.



PHOTO: AFP

The annual "Tribute in Light" memorial that echos the shape of New York's World Trade Centre twin towers is illuminated with the Statue of Liberty (C) and World Trade Centre (L) during the 10th Anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

## Strauss-Kahn quizzed in France

AFP, Paris

French police yesterday interviewed former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn as part of an inquiry into the alleged attempted rape of a young journalist in a Paris flat in 2003, his lawyers said.

Banon came forward with her allegation in June after Strauss-Kahn was arrested in New York and accused of attempted rape by a hotel maid there. The French writer, now 32, says that Strauss-Kahn tried to rape her in an empty Paris apartment in 2003.

Strauss-Kahn has denied both claims. The New York prosecutor's case fell apart when it emerged that his accuser there had a history of dishonesty.

## CAMERON IN MOSCOW UK, Russia seek to mend damaged ties

AFP, Moscow

David Cameron pledged to rebuild ties with Russia yesterday as he met President Dmitry Medvedev on the first visit to Moscow by a British leader since the 2006 poisoning of a Kremlin critic in London.

While they failed to resolve a dispute about the case itself and remained at odds over Syria, Prime Minister Cameron and Medvedev emphasised their desire to turn over a new leaf as they oversaw trade deals worth more than \$300 million.

"If we can build a stronger relationship, I believe both our countries will gain," Cameron said during a joint press conference at the Kremlin.

"We have managed to largely overcome some existing difficulties," Medvedev said as the two leaders showed off their camaraderie by smiling profusely and calling each other by their first names.

Relations between London and Moscow have been strained ever since Alexander Litvinenko -- a former KGB agent and fierce critic of the current Russian premier Vladimir Putin -- died from polonium poisoning in London.

Russia's refusal to extradite Andrei Lugovoi, the chief suspect in the murder who later became a lawmaker, led to a sharp deterioration in ties under the former Labour government in London.

## Go slow on Syria

*Medvedev tells UK PM; France blasts UN inaction*

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev told British Prime Minister David Cameron yesterday it would be a mistake to put more pressure on Syria's regime for its crackdown on the opposition.

Medvedev told reporters after talks with Cameron that the difference between Russia's approach to its traditional regional ally and that taken by the West was "not dramatic".

But he stressed that any punitive actions must be applied equally to both sides of the Syria conflict because the opposition was continuing to reject calls to engage Assad in direct talks.

Russia has blocked previous attempts by the world governing body to sanction President Bashar al-Assad's regime and is promoting a separate draft resolution that simply calls on both sides to open direct talks.

Medvedev last week also called some of those protesting against Assad "terrorists" and refused to agree with Western states that

no longer recognise Assad's legitimacy.

Cameron for his part acknowledged that he and Medvedev had essentially failed to breach their gap on the dispute.

"There is a difference of perspective between Russia and Britain on this issue," Cameron said. "Clearly, Britain would like to go further. We do not see a future for Assad."

Meanwhile, the French foreign ministry blasted the United Nation for its failure to take a clear position on the bloody repression of demonstrations in Syria.

Recalling that according to the UN at least 2,600 people have been killed in Syria, ministry spokesman Bernard Valero also slammed the "revolting murder" of a protest organiser, Ghiyath Matar, while in Syrian detention.

"How long with the international community remain blind and dumb in the face of this endless sequence of crimes? That's the question we're asking today," Valero said.

"The blocking of a joint position at the United Nations Security Council is a scandal," Valero said.

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