

Beat: Local

Kenyan bus driver charged over wreck that killed 42 passengers

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USPA News - A Kenyan bus driver was charged Wednesday with causing the deaths of 42 people last week when his crowded passenger bus, that missed two of its wheels and had other defects, veered off a road and plunged into a valley west of the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. The accident happened at around 2:20 a.m. local time on August 29 when Steve Mutia, the driver of the "City to City" bus, lost control of his vehicle, causing it to careen off the road and roll into a valley at Ntulele near the town of Narok, located in the southwestern district that carries the same name and is about 105 kilometers (65 miles) west of Nairobi.

A total of 42 people were killed while 44 others were transported for treatment to Narok District Hospital, AIC Kijabe Hospital, and Kenyatta National Hospital. Mutia was also injured but fled the scene and hitched a ride to a nearby hospital, where he used a false name to receive treatment before moving to a private hospital for a precautionary scan of his head. Police in the region had tried to track down Mutia until Tuesday afternoon when he walked into a Nairobi police station in the company of his wife and surrendered himself. He was photographed with a bandaged arm but appeared to be in an otherwise good condition, although he said he suffered a bruise on his head and complained of hip pain. During his initial court appearance on Wednesday, prosecutors charged Mutia with 42 counts of causing death by dangerous driving. They also charged him with driving a road unworthy vehicle as investigators found the bus was not fitted with a speed governor, was leaking left shock absorbers, was not fitted with seat belts, was missing two right rear wheels and had worn out tires. Earlier, prosecutors also charged businessman Mohammed Sheikh, the owner of the bus, for operating defective vehicles and failing to keep a record of his drivers. He was charged alongside four other drivers of the bus company, all of whom are accused of driving road unworthy vehicles. Road accidents in Kenya are common due to reckless driving and the poor conditions of roads and vehicles, but Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta promised action last week to reduce the number of accidents. "My deepest condolences to the family and friends of those who died in the grisly road accident on Ntulele Road," he said. Kenyatta added: "We are losing too many Kenyans through road accidents and the onus is us as car owners, as commuters, as traffic police and as leaders. We are going to take action now, not just against the drivers but even the car owners themselves. Car owners must now bear the burden of ensuring that their cars are roadworthy and are driven in accordance with the traffic laws."

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