

Press Release

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The cycle of blaming vandals for the perennial pipeline fires in the country is no longer tenable. Government should embark on a comprehensive probe of the Pipelines and Products Marketing Company (PPMC) to ascertain the degree of in-house complicity in illegal siphoning of petroleum products along the corporation's distribution network, the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) has said.

In a reaction to the explosion from a ruptured PPMC pipeline in Abagbo Village in Lagos, ERA/FoEN regretted that serial pipeline explosions have brought ridicule on the country, portraying Nigeria as a country that lacks the capacity to manage the distribution of petroleum products. The Abagbo explosion which occurred on Christmas day claimed over 40 lives. PPMC, the operator of the burst pipeline is the products distribution arm of NNPC.

This last explosion, coming exactly one year after the Abule Egba explosion which claimed over 1000 lives, and less than one month after the Arepo Explosion which led to the death of a senior NNPC official, is an embarrassment to the nation.

What kind of signals are we sending to the international community? This last explosion happened at a location that is less than two kilometers from the Atlas Cove, yet NNPC officials did not detect any problems until the tragedy occurred. How could that level of petroleum products market be going on at that location without security agencies being aware? queried ERA/FoEN Executive Director, Nnimmo Bassey

ERA/FoEN alleges that it confirmed from community people that pipe leakages occurred weeks before the explosion, wondering while it was not discovered by the NNPC surveillance team.

If we continue to blame locals who always swarm on a burst pipe after the big goons have finished their job, we will not get to the root of this problem. How do they always know what products are being pumped and at what time? What happens to the pressure gauges at the pumping and receiving tanks? These mechanisms are to give red signals whenever there is drop in pressure as a result of leakages. There may be in-house complicity in all of this. Nnimmo added.

Apart from the probe of PPMC, ERA once more recommended enforcement of integrity checks on pipelines, effective surveillance, prompt response mechanisms and community participation in decisions bothering on the security and safety of pipelines and eradication of poverty as solutions to the unending cycle of pipeline fires in the country.