

Railway accidents in Egypt

Contributed by Tamer Ibrahim
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Egypt's national railway system is the biggest in the Middle East, with nearly 5,000 kilometers of track, according to Egyptian National Railways.

It is well known that Egypt is characterized by a huge Railways transport network includes two different levels of passenger, the first level is luxury in most cases to foreign tourists and Egyptians who are able to afford it.

Other level is old and slow trains the passenger squeeze with their baggage, and sometimes beasts.

They serving on board a long hours and sometimes days during which they would cook the food and eating using portable gas stoves.

On the other hand, the Egyptians complain about the poor condition of most third-class passenger trains, which used by the majority of the poor and low-income.

They believe that the development processes, focusing only on first class trains used by the prosperous and tourists.

Egypt has a poor safety record on its railways, and there are several fatal accidents each year, usually blamed on poorly maintained equipment, according to AP.

The worst recent disaster took place in February 2002 when a train heading to southern Egypt caught fire, killing 363 people.

More recently, a passenger train barreling toward a station collided with a second train in August 2006, killing 58 people.

The train belonged to Egypt's oldest and most dilapidated third-class train service.

The recent crash stirred a wave of outrage among Egyptians over the poor state of transportation infrastructure.

But the head of the state railway authority was blaming "human error"

The official MENA news agency said Prosecutor General Abdel-Maguid Mahmoud ordered the formation of a technical committee to determine the reasons behind the accident.

Egypt's officials said a gas stove being used by a passenger on board the packed train started the fire, according to MENA.

For his part, the Egyptian transportation minister Mohammed Mansour acknowledged after the accident that the rail system was in need of a major overhaul and was severely underfunded.

Meanwhile, many of the crashes are due to reckless driving, poor road and vehicle maintenance and lack of enforcement of traffic regulations.

The recent Railways incidents prompted Egypt's government to approve an immediate allocation of \$860 million to develop the rail infrastructure, plus another \$600 million in loans to the sector later in that year.

But Ahmed Salah, an old Technical expert of the railway Authority, who surprises the all, said that the new trains are deeply flawed and we all complain it.

Salah, who is a technical of Egypt's railway authority over 40-years, told Al Hayah TV channel "the life channel" that new trains that Al Ayyat accident's train is one of it, have the braking in the same place feature on the speed of Forty kilometers but it did not stop.

It means that this feature does not work, so that the new trains are deeply flawed.

While, Mr. Magdy al Galad, Editor in Chief of Egypt's Independent Newspaper Al Masry Al Youm pointed out in response to technical expert of Egypt's railway authority speech it is a disaster and must stop it.

We should not stress to know the charge of the incident meanwhile we ignore quickness examination of these new trains and repair the errors before repetition the tragedy, added al Galad.

He said that we must provide the good training for the drivers before they drive these computerized trains after these more that 40-years old and rickety trains that they were driving it.

History of Egypt's Trains Crashes

October 2009: A passenger train has collided with the back of a second one ahead of it on the tracks just outside Cairo, destroying several passenger cars and killing at least 18 people, a police official said.

At least 55 others were injured in Saturday's accident, the official said.

The train that caused the collision was headed from Cairo to the southern city of Assuit, while the one that was hit was travelling from Giza province to the oasis town of Fayoum, Egypt's official Middle East News Agency said.

The first train had made an unscheduled halt, apparently after hitting a cow. However the second train continued on at normal speed until it ran into the back of the stationary train.

Villager Samhi Saleh Abdel Al, 21, said: "The first train stopped after hitting a cow and 10 minutes later the second train arrived at full speed.

"I was sat near the road at around six o'clock (1600 GMT) when I heard a deafening screeching, then shouts and I saw passengers jumping from the train," he said.

Al-Ayyat was the scene of Egypt's deadliest train crash when the bodies of at least 361 passengers were recovered from a train following a fire in February 2002.

July 2008: At least 37 people have been killed in a collision between a train and several vehicles at a level crossing in northern Egypt, police have said.

Some 40 more people were injured in the crash near Marsa Matruh, 430km (270 miles) north-west of the capital Cairo.

A truck failed to stop at the crossing and pushed several waiting vehicles into the path of the oncoming train, security officials said.

Road accidents are frequent in Egypt killing about 6,000 people every year.

August 2006: In the latest disaster in the serial of Egypt's train crash, two trains collided with one coming from Mansoura heading to Cairo and the other coming from Banha in the same direction, resulting in a violent collision between two trains.

Statistics on the number of dead was different, a security source reported that the death toll reached 80 and more than 163 wounded, while the official news agency MENA said that 51 people were killed, while the news channel "Al Jazeera" said that the death toll reached 65.

It is described as Egypt's deadliest rail accident since 2002 when a fire broke out on a train, killing more than 370 people.

May 2006: Freight train collided with another at one of "Al Shaht" stations, Al Sharqia province resulting in injuring of 45 people.

February 2006: two trains collided near the city of Alexandria which birth to injuring about 20 people.

February 2002: It is considered an Egypt's deadliest rail accident which a fire broke out on a train, killing more than 370 people and the worst recent disaster took place.

The accident was happened at the Ayyat district 70 km from south of Cairo. It was the worst of its kind in Egypt's Railways history, which has killed more than three hundred and fifty passengers after the train continued for walking for a distance of 9 kilometers and the fire burning it; which forced passengers to jump from the windows, and there is no official count of the dead final number.

Analysts differed in the number of victims, as some sources reported that the number of victims exceeds 1000 people, but there is no official statement of the victims' number and this is what has raised doubts in the final outcome in the number of victims.

November 1999: a train from Cairo to Alexandria collided with a transportation truck and derailed his way to agricultural land, leading to 10 dead and wounding others 7 were seriously.

April 1999: the collision of two passengers trains let to kill 10 passengers and injured more than 50 people, most are dangerous.

October 1998: a train collided near Alexandria with one of the huge concrete bumpers, which led the train to push towards a market crowded with vendors, killing 50 people and wounded more than 80 wounded.

The investigation attributed to one of the passengers who tampering with the train air brake.

February 1997: Human and references disorder cause to a collision between two trains north of the Aswan city and at least 11 people killed and many injuries.

December 1995: 75 passengers killed and hundreds injured because of a collision a passenger train with the back of a second one ahead of it on the tracks.

According to investigations, the onus is on the train driver who has exceeds the limit of speed, despite the presence of heavy fog, which makes his is unable to take the necessary action in a timely manner.

December 1993: 12 killed, 60 wounded in a collision two trains, about 90 km north of Cairo.

February 1992: Train crash kills 43 outside Cairo.

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