

Death toll rises to five as Lagos Island inferno rages days after outbreak

By : Eniola Daniel Date: 30 December 2025 7:30am WAT Share :



Raging fire at the 25-storey Great Nigeria Insurance building yesterday. PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

Despite efforts by emergency responders to contain the inferno, the blaze yesterday continued to ravage what remains of the 25-storey Great Nigeria Insurance Plc building on Martins Street, Lagos Island, with more bodies recovered from the rubble.

The Lagos State Emergency Management Agency ([LASEMA](#)) had earlier confirmed the death of three people in the fire, which broke out at about 6:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2024. However, officials at the scene said five

bodies have so far been recovered.

At least 12 people were injured, goods worth millions of naira were destroyed, and 13 others were rescued alive. The first three bodies were recovered from the rubble on the fourth day after the incident. They included one adult female and two adult males; the woman's body was handed over to her husband.

The fire also affected several neighbouring structures, including a seven-storey building to the right, a three-storey building behind it, a two-storey building to the left, a three-storey building opposite the site, a mosque, two additional three-storey buildings behind the complex and other properties.

A trader, Kafayat Adesina, said: "I am a trader in one of the affected buildings, and I was lucky to leave on time. We initially thought the fire was minor, but in under five minutes it spread wildly. We were happy when the Lagos State Fire Service arrived, but they could do little. The fire outbreak in Lagos State calls for major attention, and I think the government should establish more fire posts to control fires more easily."

Another trader, Abimbola Adeosun, said: "My daughter has a shop in the affected building, and my son-in-law also has one. I have been crying; there is nothing left. That is where they get money to feed me. We are calling for government intervention. Days later, the fire is still raging, and the fire service has been unable to put it out."

A trader, Musiliu Kaleed, said: "The number of shops being consumed by fire in Lagos is alarming; billions are lost yearly. The government should do something to help us. Some traders took loans to start their businesses, so they should be given relief."

Meanwhile, [Great Nigeria Insurance Plc](#) lamented what it described as the attitude of the lessor's family towards the property. Referring to the fire incident at No. 47/57 Martins Street during the Christmas break as unfortunate, the company, in a statement, sympathised with all those affected.

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It stated: “For the record, Great Nigeria Insurance Plc (GNI) was granted a long lease of bare land at No. 47/57 Martins Street, Lagos Island, by the Shitta-Bey Family, which is due to expire on December 31, 2036. GNI erected a 25-storey building on the land for strategic investment purposes.

“It is noteworthy that GNI has been in court with the Shitta-Bey family over the property, as the family instituted three separate suits against GNI at both the Lagos State High Court and the Federal High Court. All the suits were decided in favour of GNI. Thereafter, the family filed appeals at the Lagos Judicial Division of the Court of Appeal.

“In 2020, during the pendency of these appeals, the Shitta-Bey family, in disregard of court orders and during the subsistence of GNI’s unexpired leasehold, resorted to self-help, forcefully entered and took over possession of the property.

“The family also proceeded to lease out the property to tenants without recourse to GNI.

“As a responsible corporate organisation, GNI approached the High Court of Lagos State through a trespass action. The court ordered the family to vacate the property and restrained it from further acts of trespass. Dissatisfied, the family appealed against the ruling. Meanwhile, the substantive suit challenging the family for trespass remains pending at the Lagos Judicial Division of the High Court of Lagos State.”

“Consequently, GNI has for over five years been denied physical possession of the property. Our company has had no dealings whatsoever with the management or tenants occupying the property during this period.

“We thank the general public and our stakeholders, especially our customers, for their concern and wish to reassure them that the fire incident has not affected our operations in any way. GNI does not maintain any office or conduct any operations in the burnt building. Our head office remains at No. 8 Omo Osagie Street, off Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, and we continue to operate from there and our other branches nationwide.”