

How I lost my three-week-old daughter to Makoko demolition — Carpenter

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Morenikeji. Photo: Family

By Johnson Idowu

A carpenter, Papa Eve Amossou, has narrated how he lost his three-week-old daughter, Morenikeji, during last week's demolition carried out by the Lagos State Government in the Makoko area of the state.

Amossou, who spoke with *PUNCH Metro* during a visit to the community on Tuesday, said his wife fell into the lagoon with their newborn while trying to escape the chaos that followed the tear gas fired by policemen attached to the task force team.

According to him, “On that day, the police officers fired tear gas because they said they did not want people to gather in groups. My wife tried to move away from the area with my daughter, and she fell into the lagoon with her.

“When we rescued them from the water and got to the hospital, I was told that my daughter had died before we arrived.

“It was God who saved my apprentice, who also fell into the lagoon. The incident has left my family devastated.”

The carpenter added that his workshop was among the structures pulled down during the exercise, leaving him jobless.

“I am a carpenter, and I have lived here all my life. My workshop was demolished, and I have no job at the moment,” he said.

Some community leaders who also spoke with *PUNCH Metro* alleged that at least five residents lost their lives during and after the demolition exercise. They claimed two children and three adults reportedly died within the period.

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A community chief, Francis Samson, told our correspondent that he received reports of deaths from different sections of the waterfront community during and after the exercise.

He added that although there was an earlier agreement with the government to demolish structures within 30 metres of the power line along the lagoon, the demolition extended to about 520 metres from the high-tension poles.

Another community leader, Oluwo Fasinu Felix, corroborated the claims, adding that repeated appeals to the government to clearly mark the boundary had yielded no result.

When contacted, the Lagos State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, said the state government was not aware of the reported deaths, adding that the allegations would be investigated.

Similarly, the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Gboyega Akosile, insisted that there were no such incidents linked to the demolition.

“During the demolition? Please, go and get your facts right. ‘During’ the demolition, you said? Nothing of the sort happened during the exercise,” Akosile said.

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Recall that Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, had defended the demolition of structures in Makoko, saying it was carried out to avert tragedy.

The exercise has continued to generate reactions from stakeholders across the country.