

## Lagos collapsed building: Victims recount ordeal

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**U**P until 7.30pm Tuesday, No 56, Bola Street, Off Ibadan Road, Ebutte Metta, Lagos never attracted attention of the high and mighty in the society, as well as ordinary folks living nearby.

It had no features of prominence as it was neither located in highbrow area of Lagos nor designed and beautified like one of the 'stallions' in Lagos.

Now the place has turned into a Mecca of sort as prominent personalities including media men, both local and international, besiege the place to catch a glimpse of the gruesome death of no fewer than 42 people (as at press time) and wounding of several others.

The four-storey building of about 36 mini flats and 25 shops, caved in on Tuesday night, trapping some of the occupants.

However, it was not a good sight to behold as mourners, wailers and anguish scenes pervaded the area. It was a sight that provoked emotions, a sight one would not pray to behold, even for his or her enemy.

Relations and friends of the deceased wore mournful looks, even the policemen on duty, looked dull and confused as they saw how lifeless bodies of human beings were excavated.

The journey to their death started when on Tuesday, July 18, the four-storey building they were living in caved in and buried some of them alive while few others escaped. There was no immediate rescue response to enhance quick rescue of the trapped ones till the following morning when construction firm, Julius Berger, brought one of its machines to assist in rescuing the people.

However, kudos must go to the *area boys* who, for the first time, assisted in recovering about 20 people on the night of the incident with torchlights, handsets and local lamps. The *area boys*, armed with hammers and chisels, cut irons, broke walls and aided the rescue of some people.

On day two when the Julius Berger machine, with registration number R1378, CAT began operation, two people who resided at the top floor were rescued and about 37 people died. It was truly a black day as passersby, sympathizers trooped into the place, thereby making it difficult for the caterpillar to perform.

As at about 1pm, Wednesday, when Gov. Bola Ahmed Tinubu visited the scene, it was jam-packed as if an interesting match was being played in a stadium.

Tinubu and his entourage found it difficult to walk to scene. His appeal to the *area boys*, residents and relations, as well as friends to leave the place so as to enable the rescue operations to go on unfettered, fell on deaf ears as people surged to the place in search of their beloved ones.