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# Scores killed in Akwa Ibom church building collapse

By Dickson S. Adama, Uyo | Publish Date: Dec 11 2016 2:00AM

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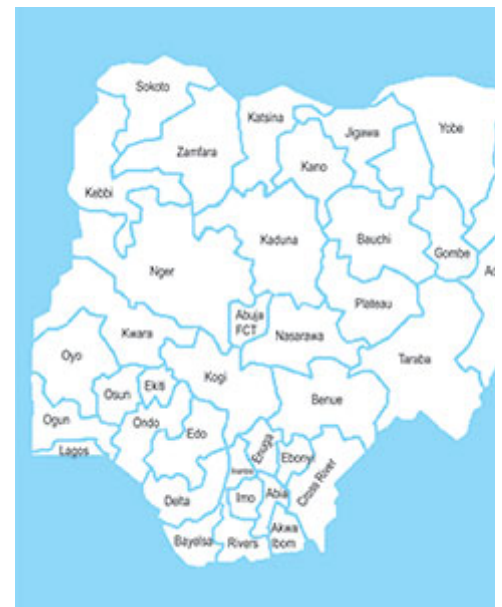
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Scores were feared killed and many others injured yesterday when the building of the Reigners Bible Church collapsed in Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, as worshippers attended the consecration of the church's founder as Bishop.

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Witnesses said the church was full to capacity with worshippers and invited guests who came to felicitate with the new Bishop, Apostle Akan Weeks, when the roof came crashing down.

Governor Udom Emmanuel, who was the special guest at the event was at the venue along with his aides and several government officials when the incident occurred, Daily Trust on Sunday gathered.

Our correspondent who visited the scene saw corpses and the injured being moved to hospitals, while construction companies deployed cranes to help rescue those who were trapped under the rubble.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Cordelia Nwawe, said she could not confirm the casualty figure since rescue operations were still going on at the time of filing this report.

Witnesses, however, said about 50 persons were killed in the incident.

The Reigners Bible Church International building is situated on Uyo Village Road.

One of the survivors said: "Normal church service was going on. Everything was normal. It was about 20 minutes after the governor arrived. Suddenly, the roof fell on worshippers. The governor was quickly rescued. But others were not that lucky. It is very unfortunate".

Another witness said the roof caved in when the church was about to take the offering.

A communication arts student of the University of Uyo, Miss Uduak Effiong who at the ceremony said she lost three friends to the incident.

Another witness, Mr Joseph James, said the Founder of the church, Apostle Akan Weeks, was taken out of the church unhurt.

Governor Emmanuel later announced the setting up of a panel to investigate the incident.

According to him, even looking at the building from a point of someone who is not an engineer, there are defects in the construction. He pledged to bring those who were careless about it to book.

He also said he would immediately contact the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE) and a team of engineers in the state to find out if it was a case of pure negligence on the part of those who constructed the building.

The governor, who described the incident as devastating, visited the victims at the Ibom Specialist Hospital where they were receiving treatment.



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A statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Ekerete Udoh, added that the state government will take care of the victims' treatment.

"The government of Akwa Ibom State has commiserated with the families of the victims of the collapsed building at Reigners Bible Church International along Uyo Village road," it said.

The government also appealed to the people of the state to remain calm, pray for the injured and avoid undue speculations, promising to give the situation "the best possible attention".

When contacted on the casualty figure, the Chief Medical Director of the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, Professor Etete Peters, said he could not confirm the number, as he was still attending to some of the survivors.

He said other casualties had been taken to other government and private hospitals in the state.

The rescue team at the scene included workers of Julius Berger Construction Company, the police, army, Fire Service, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Nigerian Medical Association and the Federal Road Safety Corps.

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