

Palliatives: 9 die in stampede in Wamakko's house

From Abubakar Auwal, Sokoto

Nine persons are feared dead and several others injured during a stampede that reportedly occurred at the residence of Senator Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko in Sokoto during the distribution of Sallah palliatives.

There was no official confirmation from the relevant security agencies as they all kept mute on the development.

But a senior officer with the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) confirmed

under condition of anonymity that nine persons died in the stampede.

The incident was alleged to have occurred on Thursday night.

Among the victims was said to be a volunteer operative with NSCDC identified as Fatima Bala.

A colleague of the deceased, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said she was attached to the Gawon Nama office of the agency.

"We lost her while rescuing a small boy caught off in the stampede. She rescued the boy but eventually lost her life because the crowd

was unprecedented," the source said.

Similarly, another officer who also confirmed the incident told our reporter that the deceased was no longer with them but had gone to the area to visit a friend.

"She was once our volunteer staff. Our investigation revealed that she was in the area to visit a friend. Unfortunately, she was among the people who lost their lives during the stampede," he said.

The spokesman for the Sokoto State Command of NSCDC, Muhammad Zayyanu and his police

counterpart, Ahmad Rufai, declined comment on the incident.

However, an associate of Senator Wamakko, who pleaded not to be named, also confirmed the incident.

He told *Daily Trust* that the distribution ran for four days and went smoothly in the first three days because the beneficiaries were mostly women and children.

"It was well arranged to avoid this kind of thing, and there was adequate security to maintain law and order.

"The first beneficiaries were women and it was peaceful and orderly.

They queued, came through the main gate and left through the back gate.

"The second day was for the vulnerable children and it went on smoothly without any hiccup.

"But during that of the youth, the place was overcrowded. They overpowered the security operatives and broke the gate of the house, causing the stampede.

"Senator Wamakko has been distributing palliatives, which include assorted food items and clothes to poor and vulnerable people in the state during Ramadan

and Eid festivals since when he was governor of the state but this was the first time this kind of thing would happen," he said.

When contacted, the media aide to the former governor, Bashar Abubakar, simply said: "You people are corrupt."

Sources at the Sokoto Specialist Hospital confirmed to our reporter that some of the injured victims were brought for treatment.

Meanwhile, the main opposition party in the state, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has called on the police to investigate the incident.