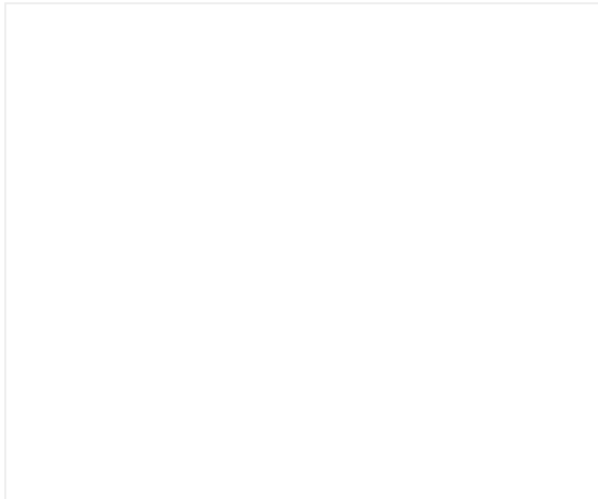




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Niger Mining Pit Collapse: Over 30 Still Trapped, 3 Weeks After

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Niger mining pit collapse: Over 30 still trapped, 3 weeks after

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By Abubakar Akote, Minna

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More than three weeks after a mining pit collapsed in Galkogo, Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, over 30 miners have remained trapped, victims' families and residents said.

Daily Trust recalls that labourers were working inside the 400-metre-deep pit owned by African Minerals and Logistics Limited when it



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Daily Trust had reported that initial efforts to rescue the trapped victims, including the site manager, Alhaji Ishaku Ibrahim, stalled because of lack of appropriate equipment.

However, findings by our correspondent yesterday showed that the recovery effort has resumed but is being done manually.

Families of the victims expressed frustration over the slow progress and lack of government's involvement in the rescue efforts.

Suleiman Isah, whose younger brother is among the trapped victims, criticised government's response to the situation, saying, "We are confused. I was crying when your call came in because my younger brother is among the victims. There is no day that I don't go to that site. The recovery team has not been able to bring his body out.

"They said his left leg had already been cut off because of stones that fell on his head. Under his corpse, three other bodies have been



■ Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake



■ Niger State Governor, Umaru Bago

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“I couldn’t go there today (Wednesday) because of the traumatic experience I had at the site yesterday, seeing how they were trying to drag out my brother from the pit. The three bodies that were so far recovered have been deposited at the mortuary of the IBB Specialist Hospital, Minna,” he narrated.

He alleged that only the affected company was involved in the recovery efforts, without any help from either the state or federal

Meanwhile, the Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake, on June 7, 2024, announced a N50 million federal government's donation to support the victims' families.

The minister, who said he was representing President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, announced the donation in the Government House in Minna during a meeting with Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago and representatives of the affected communities.

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However, Isah said that no money had been received yet.

He said, "We have not seen any money. We heard that on the social media and news platforms, but nothing has come to anybody."

"But I believe the government is not doing enough to save the victims. We learnt that some people came from Abuja, and with support from our people, they are working to bring them out. We pray they succeed," she said.

Ummi Musa, whose brother is among those trapped in the pit, said if the authorities had deployed appropriate instruments, the victims wouldn't have stayed this long in the pit.

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"This issue is very terrible. The company and the government did not do the right thing from the beginning. They said they were trying, but honestly speaking, they are just doing the little they are doing so that people will not see their fault. How can you excavate or try to rescue

security- challenged axis of Shiroro Local Government Area, Babangida Zaharadeen Kudodo, corroborated this account to our correspondent.

“The government is truly silent on the incident. As I speak with you, they have started recovering dead bodies from the pit. Four bodies were recovered but they were mutilated – two bodies were brought out on Monday and another two on Tuesday.

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“There is no hope that any of the victims would be brought out alive. Chemicals have to be seriously applied to enable the recovery operations because of the unpleasant odour oozing out of the pit; if not, no one can even stand close to the pit,” he said.

modalities to take legal action against the company for negligence and exploitation.

“As I earlier told you, we are pushing to ensure that the families of victims are fully compensated. Also, there is no corporate social responsibility project executed by the company, which has operated in the community for over a decade.

“When the company started mining, it came with escalators, but they never used the machines to dig holes; they preferred cheap labour. If it were machines that dug such pit, it wouldn’t have been difficult to rescue the victims in the event of this incident,” he added.

The ministry's director of media and strategy, Habibu Abubakar Wushishi said, "The victims are still underground, but recovery effort is ongoing. The machines and professional rescuers are still there working.

"The truth of the matter is that the pit is very deep, so they have to do it gradually, otherwise they may end up stepping on the bodies. That is the problem we are facing.

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"Because of the concern and commitment of the government, the recovery effort is still ongoing; we want to bring the victims out alive or dead."

He also replied to a text message earlier sent to his phone, stating, “Please come to the scene of the accident and see things for yourself.”

Meanwhile, the Niger State chapter of the Federation of Nigeria Mining Host Communities, on Saturday threatened to sue the African Minerals and Logistics Limited, the company managing the site.

In a communiqué jointly signed by the state coordinator and secretary of the association, Habibu Wushishi and Mohammed Mohammed at the end of its emergency meeting in Minna, it was stated that relevant authorities would be engaged to investigate whether or not the mining company operating the site had obtained a licence or lease permit from the appropriate authorities.

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