



# THE METROSection

## Collapsed building: the agony continues

### • Husband faints as dead wife is pulled out of rubble

**T**HE expectant husband fainted. He had expected to see his wife rescued alive from the rubble of the collapsed building on Egerton Street, Central Lagos yesterday.

But what the rescuers brought out yesterday was the corpse of the pregnant wife. As the husband was fainting, the crowd of onlookers wailed.

The women cupped their breasts in their hands. There was anguish all over at the scene of horror that has been pulling sympathisers to Central Lagos since Saturday when a five-storey building imploded without warning.

As the body of pregnant Mrs. Olabisi Adeaga was pulled out from the rubble, the cries rose louder.

But as people wailed in Central Lagos, far away in Ejigbo on the outskirts of Lagos, 500 occupants of another building similarly raised from a bungalow to a one-storey, are living in fear that a similar fate may befall them.

Ominous signs of a possible collapse of the Ejigbo abode were heightened last Wednesday after a thunderstorm that ripped off the roof of the building No. 47, Fatusi Street in Orilowo Ejigbo, Oshodi-Isolo Local Council.

Mrs. Adeaga was one of the several persons still missing and unaccounted for.

The five-storey building with a penthouse on Egerton Street collapsed on Saturday afternoon trapping some the residents. About five residents were said to have been rescued alive while as at yesterday, five bodies, including two pregnant women and a three-year-old baby were retrieved from the rubbles.

Desperate relations peered at every crevice as if to see their loved ones in the gloom of the rubbles.

Mr. Taiwo Adeaga had been dashing towards the site to receive his wife rescued alive.

He kept pleading with the rescuers: "The only thing that can make me happy is to rescue my wife. I am quite sure she is still alive".

He also kept trying her number, which was ringing from the rubble but there was nobody to pick it.

Adeaga was devastated by the sight of his lifeless wife with a baby in the womb.

Yesterday afternoon, rescuers were working frantically at the site.

A representative from the Lagos State Environmental Health Monitoring Unit, Mr. Jonah Samuel, confirmed that the body of Mrs. Adeaga was pulled out.

According to him, "we are doing everything we can to ensure that we remove all the composed bodies from the rubble, sanitise, deodorise and disinfect the environment against pest".

For the occupants of the one-storey building on No. 47, Fatusi Street, they have been living in a fool's paradise believing that their house was as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar.

But after the fierce wind which the Meteorological Department has not released the speed, the occupants suddenly realized that they were living in a home literally built with loose soil.

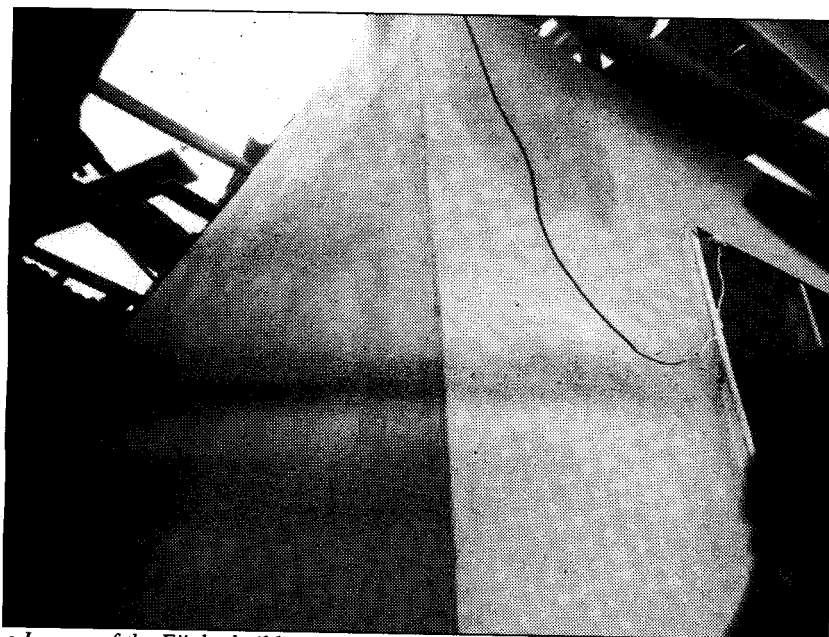
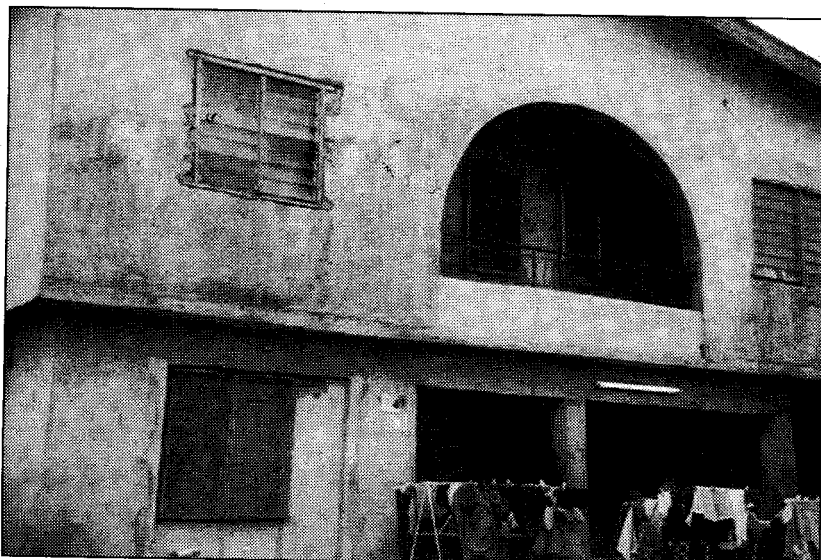
The occupants of No. 47 Fatusi Street have just come to the painful realisation that their home also stands the chance of collapsing any time from now.

For now, about 65 per cent of the roof has been ripped off during the storm. The Meteorological Department had predicted early in the year that there would be many storms this year.

The other usual telltale signs before an implosion of buildings are there. And like in all previous cases of building collapse in the city, the occupants are aware of these signs but seem transfixed because of the harsh economy that makes relocation a tedious task.

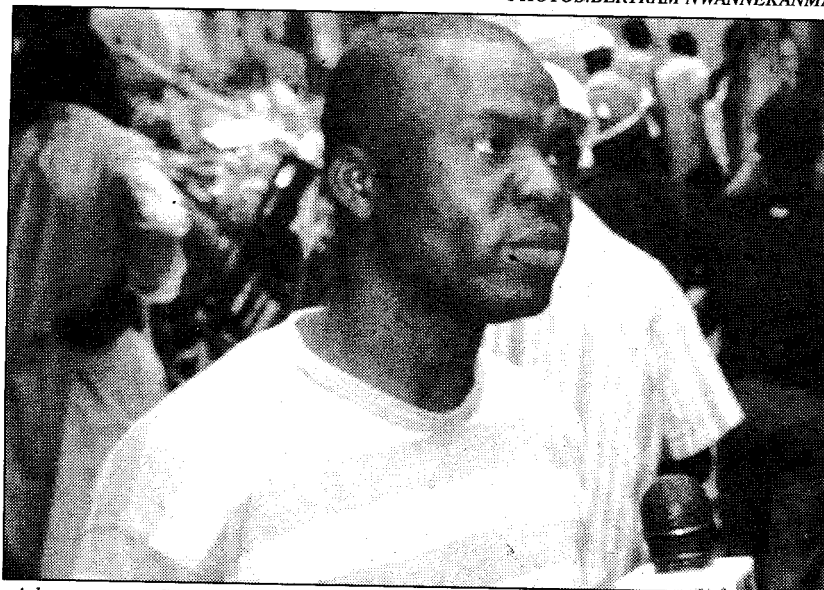
The occupants are helpless. They seem in a reverie from which all now pray they would not wake up from like the occupants of Egerton Street.

The over 500 occupants of the 34-room building at No. 47, Fatusi Street have been living without fear until last Wednesday's



• Images of the Ejigbo building...yesterday

PHOTOS: BERTRAM NWANNEKANMA



• Adeaga...as at Sunday

By Regina Akpabio,  
Bertram Nwannekanma  
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thunderstorm. Now, they are worried.

Their anguish has heightened following the revelation that the landlord who claims to be a mason, bricklayer and welder turned what was formerly a bungalow into a storey building.

A female tenant who pleaded not to be named said: "Our prayer everyday is that God will bless us with money so we can move out before it is too late."

"The cracks on the building are enough indication that doomsday is near. We are apprehensive of what may happen. Our landlord seems not interested. I don't know what to do now. Just look at our own rooms, the roof is leaking and our fears increase whenever

it rains, because apart from destroying our property, we fear the house could cave in".

Another tenant, who lives on the ground floor and identified simply as Ugochukwu, said it was not as if he did not know the implication of living in such a house.

The exorbitant rent charged by Lagos landlords and the poor wages he earns, are the major constraints to his relocating.

Relating his helplessness, he said: "To tell you the truth, I'm really afraid of the building but I don't know what to do now."

"I have no money to get an alternative accommodation now. I am just praying that the good Lord will keep us till I get money and leave the place".

But Victoria Emefena, who works at Yaba Local Council and her husband, Prince Emefena, whose two-room apartment was affected by the storm, said the

landlord has not shown any interest in either reinforcing the building or pulling it down to avoid a tragedy.

Giving an account of last Wednesday's thunderstorm, the couple said it had exposed what had been the weakness of the building over the years.

"May be God wants to avert what could have been a major disaster that He allowed the thunderstorm to bring to light what had been covered up over the years, even though it is painful to us."

"We are now homeless after the storm. But we are convinced that God will use this to save others", they said yesterday.

The Emefenas, who claimed they were deceived into paying for the apartment six years ago when they were desperately in need of accommodation, said they could not move out even when they noticed that the structure was weak.

"We had no money. That is why we have been here all these years", they said.

According to the couple, the landlord did not consult anybody to build for him as he claimed to be a bricklayer, a mason and welder without minding the danger posed by his actions.

Another tenant said: "The building was initially a bungalow before Baba decided to make it a storey building."

"If you look at my side of the room, you can see clearly cracks and marks that suggest that all is not well with this house. It is weak and the rain and storm can lead to a tragedy unless something is done now".

The woman, who claimed to have lived in the building for eight years, said besides the sub-standard materials used by the landlord, the foundation was not meant for anything bigger than a bungalow.

A woman in the neighbourhood who runs a telephone service, Madam Blessing Ezekwem, said the rainstorm exposed the cracked walls and leaking roof, which frightened everybody that Wednesday afternoon. It also affected a shop at No. 2, Anipelu Close in the area.

According to her, though no life was lost, the storm exposed the dangerous handiwork of landlords in the area who always circumvented the accepted building standards as they are only interested in the money they get from tenants.

When *The Guardian* visited the building at the weekend, the landlord, Sumobi Omilani who was said to have inherited the building from his father, was not available for comment. He had gone to work.

There were cracks on the wall despite some plastering done by the landlord.

The scary Ejigbo building, as well as the ones that had collapsed bear credence to the reasons proffered by the President of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, Emeka Ezeh on why buildings are collapsing.

He said while some landlords were greedy and indiscriminately increase the number of rooms or flats in the original plan, many builders the landlords use are non-professionals who use poor quality materials.

"Where a structure that was meant for a two-storey building ended up as a four-storey building, what do you expect?" he asked.

He lamented that the incidence of collapsed buildings will continue until the government stamps out quacks in the building industry and the government leases out the supervision of construction of buildings to professionals.

"The Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning is not adequately equipped to police the entire state and that is why it is necessary to zone out the supervision of construction sites to zonal consultants because it is just not enough to grant approval", he said.

The government has said that developers, bricklayers and anybody found wanting in the area of building construction will be prosecuted.