

## NEWS.

# Death toll hits 48 in Synagogue's collapsed building

Written by Tope Templer Olaiya (Lagos), Chuks Collins (Awka) and Ayoyinka Jegede (Uyo)

Category: [National](#) Hits: 19 • [Print](#)



• **Search for trapped bodies continues**

## • TAN, PFN sympathise with church, families over incident

WITH four more dead bodies brought out of the rubble of the collapsed building in the premises of the Synagogue Church of All Nations, Lagos, yesterday, the death toll has risen to 48.

Though officials of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) and the Accident Investigation Bureau (AIB) were at the site to assess the debris, especially after revelation that an aircraft was sighted hovering over the church building some minutes before the collapse, the two airport agencies refused to speak with the media, saying they would come up with an official response and reaction after concluding investigations on the incident.

Meanwhile, rescue operation was yet to reach ground zero as more earth-moving equipment were being mobilised to the site by a construction giant, Julius Berger, to break through the slabs of concrete to other layers of the collapsed building, particularly the ground floor.

Also, five police sniffer dogs are to be deployed to the site to assist in the search and rescue of trapped bodies.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) spokesperson, Ibrahim Farinloye, Monday said: "We are deploying Nigeria Police Sniffer dogs to assist in locating trapped victims as we are getting close to area suspected to have more people trapped.

"The Commissioner of Police has ordered release of five dogs after a collective decision to use the dogs by responding agencies and NEMA asked the Police Disaster Management Unit to facilitate to manage the dogs immediately. The dogs will assist in search and rescue faster and help in early conclusion of the operations."

The Guardian learnt that the collapsed building inside the church's premises was initially a two-storey building before the church decided to add four additional floors on it.

As at the time the incident occurred, work was ongoing on the topmost two-storey building, while the four others were occupied and being used as guest lodges for foreign visitors to the church.

Besides, the Lagos State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Olutoyin Ayinde, told reporters at the scene that there was no evidence yet that the church secured regulatory approval before it embarked on increasing the floors of the collapsed building.

Ayinde said: "Though investigation is still ongoing, there is no proof that the church obtained a permit to add additional structures to existing ones. We have no proof that there is a permit.

"We have asked the engineering team to meet us and for about two hours now, no member of the engineering team has come because we also have questions to ask."

Meanwhile, the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria (TAN) has condoled with Prophet T.B. Joshua and the parishioners of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) over the collapse of one of their buildings, which led to the injury and death of several worshippers and visitors at the weekend.

The Director of Operations of TAN, Mr. Benchuks Nwosu, in an interview with journalists in Awka yesterday, urged the church authorities to bear the trying moment with equanimity. He prayed for quick recovery of those hospitalised and the peaceful repose of the souls of those that lost their lives.

Nwosu urged the man of God and leader of the church, Prophet Temitope Joshua, not to be discouraged over the unfortunate incident, bearing in mind the Biblical injunction that says God must be glorified no matter what happens under the planet earth.

He pointed out that TAN is impressed with the committed service of the prophet towards assisting humanity to get out of their several afflictions through his spiritual prowess and sometimes offering financial assistance to the needy, which according to him, is very rare in many churches today.

Also, President of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Rev. Felix Omobude, has sympathised with Pastor Joshua, the bereaved families and the church over the tragic incident, which had claimed lives and left others injured.

Omobude, in a telephone interview with The Guardian, said: "We sympathise with Pastor Joshua and families that are bereaved. God will help them through this painful loss; it is tragic because lives are involved. Our heart goes out to bereaved families, God will strengthen them."

Nwosu however challenged the individuals saddled with the responsibilities of monitoring building and construction works to wake up and live up to their bidding so as to put an end to incessant collapse of buildings in the country.

He stressed the need for all Nigerians to ensure that they use quality materials whenever they want to embark on building construction, noting that it would be tantamount to penny wise, pound foolish for an individual in the attempt to save cost get collapse building in return.

He pointed out the need to seriously look into the allegation of possible terrorism raised by Prophet Joshua by all relevant agencies so checkmate such dangerous tendencies if it established that the claim of an aircraft hovering over the building over a number of times before it collapsed is true.

The TAN boss commended NEMA and other such humanitarian organisations for their quick response to the distress call of the church, which has equally been a source of solution to mankind.

The PFN president said building experts would be able to tell what happened as this is not the first time building is collapsing.

Talking on why such incident could have happened without being revealed to his prophets, Omobude said God is not obligated to reveal everything to a prophet.

His words: "God is not obligated to reveal everything to a prophet, although many of the prophets appear they have every answers to everyone's questions."

Omobude, therefore, called on Nigerians to be more prayerful for the country.