

One dies as three Lagos high-rise buildings collapse, eight others razed in Balogun market fire

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Scene of the fire yesterday

Barely four days after fire leveled the Amu plank market in Mushin, the popular Balogun market on Lagos Island was yesterday razed in an inferno that consumed no fewer than seven high-rise buildings and shopping plazas. The fierce inferno raged for more than five hours, leaving in its wake wanton destruction of goods and property worth billions of naira.



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6 hours ago

One person was also confirmed dead in the fire outbreak that started at about 10:00a.m. from Anambra plaza and quickly moved to other plazas before the arrival of firefighters. The victim, many say was the cause of the fire. He died on the spot and was taken away in an ambulance. As at 3:00p.m. yesterday, the fire was still raging even as officials of the Lagos fire service battled to put it off.

The Guardian gathered that the fire started when a trader was refueling his generating set while still on at Anambra plaza. As he was pouring the fuel into the fuel tank, the generator went up in flames.

When The Guardian visited, tears were rolling uncontrollably from the traders whose goods were engulfed by the inferno, while other sympathisers were worried about the frequent occurrence of fire in market. On November 5 and 9, 2019, two separate fire incidents gutted Balogun market, killing one police officer that was deployed to control the situation.

According to Ifeanyi Obi, whose shop was burnt and wares consumed, “the fire started when one of the traders was putting fuel inside his generator. Unfortunately, he threw the remaining gallon of fuel, which had already caught fire towards Plaza 4. It was from there the fire spread to other plazas, like Plaza 2, 6 and 8”.

Narrating how it happened, a trader who simply gave his name as Emeka, said: “I was inside my shop when I initially heard people shouting fire, I came out and took a look at the place, it was just small fire. So, I went back inside before I knew what was happening, the plaza opposite my plaza was in flames and the fire was spreading really fast. I was only able to get a bag of wares from my shop. The others got burnt. I narrowly escaped being burnt to death. I was almost burnt while trying to park my wares. At a point, I had to flee and abandon my wares.”

When asked if he was able to take anything from his shop, one of the affected traders who gave his name as Okey, simply said: “I rescued myself. When there is life, there is hope.”



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At 6:00p.m. about six buildings used as shopping mall by traders at the Balogun market had been razed down. Most of the traders looked gloomy as they helplessly watched while officials of the fire service, hampered by the cluster nature of the buildings, battled for hours to contain the fire from spreading to other buildings.

Others who could not hold their emotions simply wept profusely at their losses.

Business activities at the market were also grounded, as shops that are not affected remained shut. It was also double jeopardy for some affected traders, as their wares rescued from the fire, were also looted where they were temporarily kept in the melee around the area.

Six hours after the fire outbreak, two buildings collapsed as fire fighters tried to curtail the blaze. Some minutes before the collapse, policemen, fire fighters and LNSC officials were preventing people from passing in front of the buildings. Within a twinkling of an eye, the buildings collapsed together, just as people including passersby and residents ran helter-skelter for safety.

Meanwhile, one building had collapsed earlier when the fire started at 10:00a.m. An hour before the two buildings collapsed, the General Manager of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) had told reporters at the scene that the fire had been curtailed.

Immediately after the collapse, market men and women in the building beside the collapsed buildings hired men to safeguard their goods, which were thrown from the fourth and third floor of the building to a safe location nearby.

The Director-General, LASEMA, Dr. Olufemi Oke -Osanyintolu, disclosed that the inferno was caused by poor storage of fuel in the building. “On arrival at the scene, it was discovered that a four-storey plaza had been gutted by fire. And it has escalated to

adjoining buildings totaling seven in number but now being contained by the emergency responders.”

A trader, Mr. Kenneth Chiedu, told The Guardian that he just purchased goods worth about N700,000 24 hours before the incident, but which was completely razed in the disaster. He could not control himself as he broke down in tears.



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6 hours ago

While the fire raged, some miscreants seized the opportunity to steal goods as they pretended to be helping to evacuate them from nearby buildings. Some traders were seen wearing worried and confused over their stolen goods. Hundreds of goods were thrown down from various floors of the six-story building close to the razed building, causing the goods to be muddled together. The popular Balogun market is known for sale of variety of textile fabrics.