

# Two die, several injured in Rivers Xmas handout stampede

By Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt

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No fewer than two persons have been confirmed dead and several persons, including pregnant women injured during a stampede in Obio/Akpor Council Area of Rivers State, while struggling for Christmas handouts.

The Guardian learnt that Pinkcoin, an online blockchain digital assets firm, had invited its registered members from Emouha, Ikwere and Obio/Akpor councils to its office in Rumuodara for Christmas palliative.

Eyewitnesses said as early as 7.30a.m. a crowd, which included uninvited persons, gathered at the venue and the management could not manage the situation as thousands struggled to gain access into the firm's premises.

Consequently, the situation got out of control, leading to a stampede where people fell and were trampled upon while others sustained serious injuries.

A hospital official put the death toll at two, but a manager of a hospital where some of the victims were taken said: "Seven persons were brought here, two were dead on arrival, but we tried to revive five and they are responding well, although they still need serious medical care."

One of the survivors explained that management of the firm collected N1,000 each from every member and promised to pay them N12,000 monthly, an agreement which he said, they failed to honour, adding: "They promised to give us Christmas palliatives as a makeup, but it is unfortunate that the management did not prepare to manage the mammoth crowd it invited'.

Another victim, Blessing Dikpa, said: "We registered with N10,000 and they gave us something like ATM card, which we can use to get what we want through an exchange agent who will help give us its value since we cannot withdraw it as cash.

The crowd was so much that people started dragging and we saw about eight people lifeless on the ground, while several got broken legs and heads."

Confirming the development, the Rivers State Police Command said, only two persons died in the stampede.

Police Public Relations Officer at the state Police Command, Nnamdi Omoni, who confirmed the incident, said the event occurred at PinkCoin Inksnation Office on the Rumuodara axis of the East-West Road in Obio/Akpor Council Area where palliatives were being distributed to its registered members

He said: "The Commissioner of Police (CP) Joseph Mukan, has ordered investigation of the incident with a view to ascertaining the circumstances behind the event and prosecuting those found culpable for any crime."

