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Ikoyi collapsed building: Serving corps member, other bodies recovered as death toll hits 22

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• Contractor's identity unverified, says Sanwo-Olu • Document confirms that 15 floors were approved for collapsed structure

EXPECTATIONS that more people will be rescued alive from the rubble of the 21-storey collapsed building in Ikoyi, Lagos were dashed yesterday when the lifeless body of Zainab Oridamola, the female member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), serving with the construction company, Fourscore Homes Limited, was pulled out and confirmed dead.

Oridamola was one of those trapped in the ill-fated building, whose family members and friends were praying earnestly for their safe rescue, but that was not the case as she was among the 22 bodies confirmed dead by rescuers at the time of filing this report.

Her death and two others frittered away any hope of other survivors as rescuers restricted access to the site.

Family members of persons trapped under the collapsed building had besieged the site yesterday, furious that rescuers were slow, as the operation entered the third day.

The protesting residents and family members, who volunteered to do the search themselves were, however, calmed with the arrival of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who got into Lagos on Tuesday from Italy, where he was attending the G-20 summit.

Sanwo-Olu appealed for patience, stressing that the search was not a normal one. He said: "This is not a normal search and rescue or a typical building collapse. This is a situation, where the whole building came down, there are no pillars in any form holding anything."

"We feel a lot of concern for the families so, there's a lot of psychosocial therapy, people are upset, angry and uncomfortable but I can assure that we are doing everything possible. But for the recovered corpses, we are doing a systematic process of identifying the corpse and an autopsy is being conducted and we believe the corpse will be ready in days."

The governor said so far, out of the nine persons rescued, three have been discharged, while six persons are undergoing treatment at the Lagos Island Hospital.

He stressed that the address of the contractor when visited was merely a residential area and there were alter-



Mother of Zainab, the late NYSC member (middle) being consoled by officials of the Red Cross PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

tations on the signpost.

He said that the contractor violated the law guiding construction work as there was no manifest on the site.

Describing the incident as a national loss, he said: "This is an event that could be described as a clear national disaster, this is an event where we can say mistakes were made from all angles and it's an event that should not be happening in a modern day city like Lagos."

"It has been a difficult journey for all the rescue workers and we appreciate their works and we will continue to do our best to get to the root of the situation."

"Unfortunately, we did not have the manifest of everybody that was on site and which is against the law. On a daily basis, there is always a manifest of everybody working in a construction company. It's also difficult to identify anybody working with the construction company. No one has come forward as the project manager or a staff of the developer, and we are also working without the full information of the modus operandi of the company. That is why we don't know the number we are dealing with or what work they are doing there."

"It's still completely not clear, but what we know is that we have been able to rescue nine persons, six of them are still in the General Hospital and three have been discharged."

"We have asked Mr. Gbolahan Oki, the general manager of the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA) to proceed on an indefinite suspension. Everyone found guilty at the

cause of investigation will face the full wrath of the law. For us to get to the root of what has happened, a commission of inquiry that consists of persons outside the government has been established, and they have been given 30 days to tell us what had gone on."

"The members are; President, Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP), Tayo Ayinde, Dr. Akilto Idris Adeleke, Yinka Ogundairo, Godfrey O. Godfrey and Mrs. Bunmi Ibrahim, the secretary of the panel is Mr. Ekundayo Onajobi."

"We have a desk set up where we want family members to submit the names and pictures of their family members. We have designed a form to be filled and created a website, lagosmind.org/help or email: help@lagosmind.org. We are still hopeful because each time they pump oxygen and water into the debris so that if there are survivors, they will still have the opportunity to breathe. We don't know when this will be completed, but we have enough resources to continue the search and pull out the last person, so we need to keep hope alive."

In the executive order signed by the governor to give legal backing to the panel of enquiry, the governor said they will determine if there's full compliance with the building material law of the state, to determine if there is oversight lapses on the part of the regulatory authority, to determine the number of casualties and examine other matters and make necessary recommen-

dations to forestall future occurrence.

Sanwo-Olu, who was asked why he claimed the government does not have the identity of the contract, said: "This is a vague question, because a contractor should have come forward that he works for the firm, but nobody has done that. We know the name but we don't have any other information."

"There is an address but it's a residential address, and there's nobody there. If you check the board, some things have been cleaned up."

The governor said the survivors include, 19-year-old Benin Republic national, Ahmed Kenleku; 21-year-old Sunday Monday, who suffered a leg fracture; 37-year-old Adeniran Mayowa, who suffered a hip injury; 33-year-old Shola Bade Nurudeen, who has a pelvic injury; 26-year-old man Odutan Timileyin and 32-year-old Waliu Lateef.

MEANWHILE, no government official could confirm the authenticity of a report which claimed that a pastor in charge of Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Water Parish in Ibafo, Ogun State, Ola Ogunfuwa, who working as a contractor on the project and 22 of his workers, were among those stuck in the rubble.

The Guardian also sighted documents, which confirmed that only 15 floors were approved for the 21-storey building, which collapsed on Monday, November 1, 2021.

The document showed that the state Physical Planning Permit Authority issued approval for 15 floors, three blocks of buildings to Fourscore Height Limited of 44b,c,d Gerard Road, Southwest Ikoyi on April 9, 2019.

The approval was given for construction of the building meant for residential purposes. The building's address was 44b,c,d Gerard Road, Southwest Ikoyi.

The registration number for the approval was 192019/DO/033/67 issued on April 5, 2019, while the Development Permit Number issued on 9 April, 2019 was DC19/DO/2442 IV.

The document confirmed the earlier statement made by suspended General Manager of LASBCA, Mr. Gbolahan Oki that the owner

of the building got approval for 15 floors.

It was also revealed that Oki only resumed in the agency two months ago and that it was the current Permanent Secretary in the state Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, who served as the DG of LASBCA when the approval was given.

It was also discovered that Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu had earlier ordered the buildings to be sealed off and this was done for four months.

MEANWHILE, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), has expressed concern over the social media reportage of the Ikoyi Lagos building collapse without caution, saying it could cause secondary disaster to families of victims.

NEMA, which commended the print and electronic media for their wide reportage of the incident, said that the reports in some social media platforms pose a big challenge to the agency.

NEMA Director General, Mr. Habib Ahmed made the observation in Ado Ekiti, yesterday, during a one-day programme tagged: 'The Role of Media in Disaster Management', organised for the members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Ekiti State Council.

Ahmed, who was represented by the Ekiti Head of Operations, Mr. Olusegun Alolayan said that the issue has become worrisome because most of the reports were not handled profes-

sionally.

Speaking on the topic, "The Role of Media in Disaster Management" the Principal Search and Rescue Officer, Ekiti State Office, Mr. Simisaye Azeez, urged journalists to be painstaking and do due diligence when disaster occurs, to provide accurate data about the victims to the public to avert secondary disasters.

AISO, the Lagos State Chapter of Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN) has demanded the immediate sack, arrest and prosecution of officials of the Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority (LASPPA), LASBCA as well as other ministries and agencies that ought to have ensured that the developer strictly complied with the building approval issued as well as other standard procedures.

The group in a statement signed by its Chairman, Comrade Rufus Olusesan and secretary, Comrade Moshood Oshunfurewa said the factors responsible for the building collapse in Lagos State are grave for profit by property developers, laxity in government's oversight and corruption of regulatory officials.

The group further called for comprehensive integrity tests on all high rise buildings in the state including all physical structures suspected to have been built with substandard materials or in violation of approval to avoid a repeat of this tragedy as well as adequate compensation for all victims of the disaster.



Safety officers at the scene of burst pipeline in Ikoyi... yesterday