

Lagos Collapsed building: I wanted best for my son, but I can't find him now, father of trapped 16-year-old boy laments

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Emmanuel Abel, a 16-year-year-old apprentice, who died in the accident

- **Hope dims for survivors with recovery of Osibona's dead body, death toll rises to 37**
- **Sanwo-Olu declares three-day mourning, inaugurates tribunal to probe incident, Flags to fly half mast**

It was a pathetic and touching moment for journalists and sympathisers yesterday, at the site of the collapsed 21-storey building in Ikoyi area of Lagos, when father of Emmanuel Abel, a 16-year-year-

old apprentice broke down in tears, while asking the whereabouts of his son, who left Abuja for Lagos with his master, Mr. Gbenga.

The man, identified as Mr. Godwin Abel, was waiting anxiously for his son to be recovered from the rubble, but when hope dimmed with the passing of time, he broke down in tears.

The old man, who could not hold himself said, Emmanuel would have been 17 years on December 30, 2021. According to him, Emmanuel finished his secondary school education at 15 and he registered him for apprenticeship when admission didn't come because of the situation in the country. He said: "It's not hunger that brought my son to Lagos, I wanted him to get something done because I won't live with him forever.

"I took him to his workshop in Abuja with my wife. I drove my son to the workshop by 5:00a.m on September 26, 2021 and they drove off to Lagos in my presence with others, but as of yesterday, I saw five bodies and one survivor, but nobody has assured me if I will be able to see my son.

"They should allow me to check the bodies that have been recovered, the governor promised to do so today but he has not spoken to us. We are hoping God will let me see my son either alive or dead. I am not fighting for justice. I just want to see my son alive or dead.

"I want newsmen to ask the government about the whereabouts of my son. My son came from Abuja." Another family member of one of those trapped under the collapsed building, also broke down in tears, while protesting and complaining over the slow pace of work. She said the state is not doing enough in the search and rescue operation.

MEANWHILE, 15 more bodies, including that said to be Managing Director of Fourscore Homes, Limited, Femi Osibona were yesterday pulled out of the rubble of the 21-storey building.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) put the total number of recovered bodies at 37, as rescue operations entered the fourth day.

However, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who had earlier pegged the number at 32 before Osibona was confirmed dead, has declared three days of mourning over the collapse.

A statement by the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, said all flags were to be flown at half-mast in public and private buildings , while all official engagements are cancelled during the mourning period.

The state, which has inaugurated a six- man panel over the matter, also commiserated with all those who lost their loved ones in the unfortunate incident.

He stated that Governor Sanwo-Olu has visited the site thrice to encourage the rescuers and console relations of those, who are believed to have been trapped in the 21-storey building.

“He was today at the hospital to cheer up those injured before swearing in a six-man panel of Inquiry to find out why the building went down and recommend measures to prevent such incidents,” the statement added.

So far, the number of survivors stood at nine. Three persons among the survivors have been discharged, while six are still at the Lagos State General Hospital, receiving treatment.

About 50 people were estimated to have been under the rubble, but Governor Sanwo-Olu, said it’s difficult to know the total number of persons trapped because there was no manifest on the construction site.

He said: “Up until this time, we still have an active rescue operation, we believe that we will not give up until we are sure that everything is completed. I want to assure you that we are still on a rescue operation.”

“The structural integrity of this site on the remaining building will commence tomorrow (today) so we will know what we are up about. Giving update on his visit to survivors, the governor said: “this morning (yesterday), I took a trip to the general hospital to encourage those that were rescued, six of them are still getting treatment, but one of them was moved to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) for additional tertiary healthcare, the five others are in good spirit and I have been able to speak with everyone of them.

“We have also inaugurated the six man panel and we have officially given them a seal of office and they are now officially constituted and they have the power to summon anybody in the cause of their independent investigation to be able to give a thorough and transparent advice and recommendation coming out of the panel and they have 30 days to give report.

“We opened a register for missing persons on Wednesday and only 19 names have been provided. A total of 32 bodies have so far been recovered and they have been transported to the mortuary in Gbagada. Some of the bodies will be ready tomorrow (today) for families to take the bodies away. The chain of command and control is from the ministry of Health, they are the ones, who take corpses to the morgues.

“So, they are accountable and the people that are moving bodies here are staff members of the Lagos State Ministry of Health, the team that are leading the rescue here are staff of LASEMA.

“I believe by now that there should be someone who should have come forward as the project manager or a consultant. We have been hoping that someone will be fair enough to come forward, it’s really sad and totally unacceptable.”

Speaking with The Guardian, Southwest Coordinator of National Emergency Management Agency, (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye, while describing how the life detector machine works, said: “Once we discover that somebody is trapped in a particular place and he or she is alive, all equipment will stop working and effort will be placed on that angle. On the chances of rescuing more people alive, he said: “we are still doing search and rescue, we are applying the best technology.

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