

Bleak Sallah in Ebute Metta as 10 die, 24 rescued in collapsed building

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Survivor being attended to by medical workers

- Frequency of building collapse embarrassing, says Buhari
- Ex corps member, who went inside, died clutching her phones
- Ill-fated building sealed, occupants were given quit notice, say authorities

It was a bleak Salah celebration for Lagosians yesterday, especially for 10 families who lost loved ones in the three-storey building that collapsed at No 24, Ibadan Street, Ebute Metta area of Lagos.

The 35-year-old building caved in at about 9:00 p.m. on Sunday, leaving many trapped.

The incident was coming barely two months after a three-storey building under construction collapsed at Akanbi Street, adjacent to the University of Lagos main gate, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, killing four people.



Survivor being attended to by medical workers

But unlike the February collapse in Yaba, 10 bodies were recovered, while 24 were rescued after rescuers made up of the Lagos State Emergency Management

Agency (LASEMA), Police, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Lagos State Building Control Agency (LABSCA) and others, achieved ground zero of the search and rescue operations.

Director. Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Mrs. Margaret Adeseye, said the 10 bodies recovered, include six males and four females, including a mother and her child, while those rescued were seven children and 17 adults.

Among the dead was a 24-year-old lady, Sinat Adekunle, who was said to have returned on Sunday to celebrate the Eid-el Fitri.

She allegedly went inside the building to retrieve her phone it caved in.

When emergency workers got to where she was trapped, her two phones were seen in her hands and both were still working.

The father of the lady was said to have completed his house and planned to move to his house after the Sallah celebration.



Scavengers at the scene

The distressed father, Muftau Adekunle, who was at the scene yesterday, lamented that rescuers were slow in rescue and search operations.

He said he got into the building on Sunday and warned his family to exit the building at about 8:30.p.m. While he and his wife, 17-year-old son and a baby exited the building, his daughter, who just finished the national youths service went back into the building to retrieve her phones.

In his words: “I planned to leave this house today (yesterday). I asked my family to exit the building when I noticed cracks in my room, my daughter, Sinat came out with us, but she went back inside.

“We were given the notice to leave the building, and my prayer was to leave on Monday, May 2. I went out with my family before my daughter went back, the building came down immediately we exited the building. After spending so much on her, now I can’t see her.”

The Guardian learnt that 22 of those rescued with injuries are all in stable condition after treatment and were discharged, while two are in critical condition.

They returned to the scene but were taken away for proper custody, while psycho-social and post-trauma counselling is being arranged for them by the Nigerian Red Cross.



It was learnt that the owner of the building gave a developer 20 years to manage the building, with an agreement to renovate it every three years, but after the building was marked, the developer left the building, while he asked the tenants to

Responders pulling out a survivor from the rubbles of the collapsed building at Ebute Metta, Lagos, yesterday

pay for six months rent instead of one year.

The landlord's son, in whose care the collapsed three-storey building was entrusted, also confirmed that he gave the occupants quit notice when he discovered the visible stress on it.

The caretaker, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told emergency responders and newsmen on Monday in Lagos that he was living in the building with other occupants until he noticed signs of distress.

"I had to leave the building and rented an apartment in the same vicinity," the caretaker said.

He said that a quit notice was eventually handed over to the occupants, but they failed to adhere to it.

The caretaker said he did not collect rent from the tenants for a long time since he expected them to pack out.

Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr. Oke-Osanyintolu Oluwafemi, told newsmen that they swung into action and were able to rescue 24 people, while two of them are in critical condition.

He stressed that their main challenge during the operation was crowd control and security, stressing that their methodology was to rescue as many as possible.

Acting Coordinator of NEMA South West, Ibrahim Farinloye, said a young boy raised an alarm about the building and those who listened were able to escape.

He said the landlord moved out after the building was marked six months ago and he has not been collecting rent, but the tenants refused to move.

Member representing Mainland II in the Lagos State House of Assembly, Moshood Olanrewaju Osun, described the incident as unfortunate and too many in the state.

He stressed that the issue of the distressed building should be looked into holistically, while the agencies involved must be alive to their responsibilities by going round to ensure that buildings which are not fit for people to occupy are demolished after marking.

MEANWHILE, President Muhammadu Buhari has described the frequency of collapsed buildings in the country as embarrassing, urging relevant state authorities to work closely with professional bodies to put a halt to the incidents.

President Buhari in a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, yesterday commiserated with families of those who died, sustained injuries and were affected in the Ebute Metta incident.

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