

Rescuers recover four more bodies in Lagos collapsed building

By **Eniola Daniel**

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Scene of the recovery yesterday. PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

- **Commissioner, Salako resigns, Oniru family commiserates with victims as developer remains at large**
- **Jandor accuses government of dereliction of duty**

Four more bodies were, yesterday, pulled out of the rubble of the collapsed seven-storey building at Oba Idowu Oniru, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Two bodies were recovered on Sunday, September 4, at about 3:15.am., thereby, bringing the total number of victims to six. The Guardian learnt that one of the victims had earlier exited the building, but he ran back to get something and was trapped.

It was also learnt that some residents had severally raised concerns about the deplorable condition of the building, which was on half plot and too close to a residential building, but state authorities chose

to do nothing about it.

The Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr. Oluwafemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said despite getting to ground zero, the agency will remain on the site. “We were informed that six persons were trapped and we have recovered six already and deposited them at the mortuary. However, we will continue to ensure that the place is safe, we will move to the next phase by tomorrow (today) where we are going to fumigate the site. We are on top of all the challenges and all the key stakeholders are on ground.”

The Southwest Coordinator of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Ibrahim Farinloye, who was among the responders said: “No one has come to claim the body of any of the victims. They may come later. Their family members may think we are still working. We discovered a gas cooker, bags and other materials, which indicated that the victims could be workers on the site that lived there.

As at yesterday, the developer was yet to be arrested by the Lagos State Police Command as he remained at large.

The state police spokesperson, Benjamin Hundeyin, who confirmed this to The Guardian, said: “Arrest is yet to be made, but we will inform you when that is done. He’s yet to visit the Command.”

MEANWHILE, the state’s Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Dr. Idris Salako, yesterday, resigned his appointment, but rumour has it that the commissioner, who told The Guardian on Sunday that the developer of the building whose name he refused to mention, broke the seal to the site thrice, was forced to resign.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso said the resignation is a prelude to the restructuring of the Ministry and its agencies.

“Governor Sanwo-Olu thanks the Commissioner for his services to the State and wishes him success in his future endeavours.

“The Governor warns all players in the sector to respect the law or face the consequences of any indiscretion, no matter who the perpetrators are,” he said.

Also, the Oniru family has commiserated with the family of the deceased victims.

In a statement signed by Head, Oniru Chieftaincy Family Estate Office, Prince Olarenwaju Ajasa, it

stated: “It is with utmost regret that we, at the Oniru Chieftaincy Family Estate Office, express our deepest sympathy with the families of the yet to be identified victims of the collapsed building on Oba Idowu Abiodun Oniru Road, Oniru Estate, Victoria Island, Lagos. This unfortunate incident is one too many, and the attendant loss of lives and valuables is quite avoidable.

“We commend the prompt and diligent emergency rescue services provided by emergency first responders. We note in particular and appreciate the concerted efforts of LASEMA, Nigeria Police, Lagos State Fire Service, Lagos State Emergency Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nigerian Red Cross and on-site paramedics.

“With a mutual view to eliminating a recurrence of building collapse in Lagos State, Oniru Chieftaincy Family Estate Office will continue to partner with Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development and all the relevant statutory agencies, saddled with the onerous duties of physical planning and regulation of building/property development in Lagos State.

“We pray to God to grant repose to the souls of the deceased, and succour to their families.”

ALSO, the Lagos PDP governorship candidate, Dr. Abdul-Azeez Olajide Adediran (JANDOR) has expressed deep sadness over the collapse of the uncompleted seven-storey building.

JANDOR stated that the unfortunate incident could have been avoided if the APC-led government had been alive to its primary responsibility of protection of lives.

He maintained that no reasonable government would allow the construction of a seven-storey building in a highbrow area of the state without the necessary approval.

According to him, the excuse given by the government that the owner of the property didn't get the proper approval is lame and irresponsible.

Dr. Adediran lamented that the frequency of building collapse in the state and its attendant human casualties has become abnormal and blamed the state government for the dereliction of duty and disregard for human life.

JANDOR, who condoled with the families of the dead, urged the officials of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) to speed up the rescue efforts of the other victims yet to be recovered from the collapsed building.

“While I commiserate with the families of the victims who lost their lives, I also pray for the safe

rescue of those still reportedly trapped in the collapsed building rubble. This incessant re-occurrence of avoidable loss of human lives in Lagos must stop,” he said.