

# Death Toll In Collapsed 21-Storey Building In Lagos Rises To 20

● Gov. Sanwo-Olu Orders LASBCA GM's Suspension

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Twenty persons by Tuesday  
were brought out dead from the

rubble of the collapsed 21-storey  
building under construction on  
Gerrard Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, ac-  
cording to National Emergency  
Management Agency (NEMA).

Nine persons, all men, were  
pulled out alive and have been  
taken to the hospital.

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**Ten bodies were removed from the rubble after an overnight search and rescue operation by a combined team of Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), with the support of construction giants, Julius Berger, and China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC).**

The other ten were pulled out in the continued search and rescue operation before on Tuesday.

According to Lagos State Deputy Governor, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, who was at the scene on Tuesday, actual number of people trapped in the collapsed uncompleted structure remains unknown.

Three of the nine persons evacuated alive have been dis-

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charged from the hospital. The victims were being treated at Lagos Island General Hospital in Marina.

The deputy governor said: "Our search and rescue operation is ongoing to remove those possibly still trapped under the rubble. Our focus right now is to get people out alive. This morning, we took out two people alive and they are responding well to treatment in the hospital.

"Totally, we have evacuated nine people alive and three of them have been discharged. We believe there could be more people trapped in the building but all our efforts are focused on rescue."

Hamzat condemned what he called "needless gathering" of people who had nothing to do with the rescue operation at

the scene, stressing that their presence was distracting those involved in the search efforts.

"What is currently happening at the site of the incident is a search and rescue operation. It is not so good to have a lot of people at the site. Sometimes, the rescuers require silence to be able to hear the voices of those who may still be trapped. The operation is ongoing and we hope we will be able to rescue more. We will not leave the site until we are able to account for everyone in the building," Hamzat said.

Meanwhile, the Lagos State government is setting up an independent panel to probe the collapse of the 21-storey building on Gerrard Road, Ikoyi.

Members of the panel will be drawn from the Nigeria In-

stitute of Architects (NIA), Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE) and other professional bodies.

According to Gbenga Omotoso, Commissioner for Information and Strategy, the panel "will independently investigate the remote and immediate causes of the incident and make recommendations on how to prevent future occurrence. The investigation is not part of the internal probe already being conducted by the government."

He said Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has said the government will surely find out what went wrong and punish those indicted.

"The governor, as a first step, has directed that the Gen-

eral Manager of the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA), Mr. Gbolahan Oki, an architect, be suspended from work immediately. The suspension is indefinite", he said, noting that more equipment and personnel have been deployed to the site to save more lives.

"Mr. Sanwo-Olu thanks all first responders and those who have joined the rescue efforts, including construction giants, Julius Berger, Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

"A help desk is to be set up at the site for people seeking information about their relations who may have been involved in the incident", the commissioner noted.

Omotoso said the government will embark on further foundation and borehole acidic level tests to ascertain the impact on the collapsed building, noting that these tests, particularly the borehole acidic level, is important for the entire Gerrard Road and adjoining areas.

"We wish to state that there will be no cover-up in the search for the truth in this incident. If anybody is found to have been indicted, he or she will face the law.

"It is important to restate that all developers and property owners are required to adhere strictly to all Building Codes and Planning Regulations to ensure the safety of lives and property. Those who ignore such regulations, breaking seals and defying enforcement, will surely be prosecuted", he said.