

Fivedead, many injured in Lagos building collapse

NO fewer than five persons were confirmed dead and more than 30 injured yesterday, following the collapse of a twin four-storey building in Lagos.

The building, which is located beside the Iru-Victoria Island Local Council Development Area (LCDA), was still under construction.

Eyewitnesses claimed that the building caved in around 3pm, trapping about 50 workers.

Unofficial sources said about 10 bodies had been evacuated from the collapsed structure said to be a shopping mall.

Officials of the Red Cross, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said five bodies were recovered. But, officials of the LCDA said only two people died.

Eyewitnesses blamed the death recorded on the delay of rescue operations, as well as the unavailability of adequate equipment.

At the time of visit, (6:45pm), *The Nation* observed that crude tools were being used to gain access to the building.

"Those who died would not have if rescue agencies had got here early. They did not get here until we had rescued about 20 bodies. We also recovered two corpses before the officials got here.

"You can see that we are using manual labour because no equipment are available. Moreover, the building is congested, such that there is hardly a space for a crane to be brought in," said one of the sources.

A crane and caterpillar were brought in at about 8:30pm, and have not been used at the time of filing this report.

The Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, LASEMA, put the dead toll at three with about five in criti-



• One of the victims being treated at a hospital close to the site...last night.

PHOTO: PRECIOUS IGBONWELUNDU

By Precious Igbonwelundu

cal condition, who have been moved to the Accident and Emergency Trauma Centre, Seven Up Toll Gate.

LASEMA's General Manager, Femi Oke-Osayintolu when contacted on telephone, said: "A twin four-storey building located at 1-7 Muri Okunola Street, VI collapsed partially and completely respectively.

"15 persons have been rescued so far while three bodies have been recovered. Rescue operations are still ongoing."

According to officials at a Medical Doctor at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), where rescued victims were taken to for first aid, about 35 injured victims had been transferred to another hospital, with five victims still at the hospital.

Joseph, a security guard in the building, told *The Nation* that he was inside his apartment when he heard a loud

sound.

"I was inside this place (pointing at the security room) when I heard a heavy noise. But before that noise, the building has been shaking in the afternoon.

"While the workers were casting, I realised that the building was shaking and around 3pm, it just sank.

"About 50 workers are in this premises, though, not all of them were trapped under. Some were able to run out, but several others could not.

"So far, about 10 dead people have been removed and many others have serious injuries, I do not know if they will survive," he said.

When asked who the owner of the building is, he said: "I do not know oga's name. It is not long I started working with them but I know the building is a shopping complex."

One of the survivors, Adeola Akinpelu, told *The Nation* that two of his broth-

ers (from Ibadan) were still trapped in the building.

He said: "Two of my brothers are still under the debris. I was working on the other side and stepped out to buy water. So, when I got back, I saw that the building had collapsed with my brothers and friends trapped inside."

Akinpelu was, however, stopped from speaking with by other survivors, who claimed they had been warned not to speak on the issue.

The Nation observed that men of the Maroko Police Division, led by the Divisional Police Officer, Johnson Akinola and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) controlled the crowd and cordoned off the building.

At the time of filing this story (9:14pm), more persons were still trapped in the rubble and rescue operations were still ongoing.

I've not failed Ekiti people, says