

Three die as another church building collapses



A fresh tragedy hit the nation's Christian community yesterday.

A one-storey building belonging to Christ Chosen Church of God, Uzama Street, Uzebu in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, collapsed, killing three persons.

This came exactly a week after a six-storey building of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Ikotun, Lagos gave way.

The death toll in the SCOAN tragedy rose to 86 yesterday, according to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The collapse of the Uzebu church provoked anger across the neighbourhood with youths attacking the property of the church.

One of its buses was set ablaze.

Their grouse was that the church authorities refused to call for assistance to rescue trapped workers hours after the building came down.

Leaders and officials of the church took to their heels on sighting the rampaging youth.

The building was, until now, used as office and residence by church officials.

However, the authorities decided to pull it down and erect a new structure.

Labourers were thus engaged to do the job. Their pay was N3000 per day.

They were said to be chiselling the pillars of the building when the unexpected happened.

Nine men resumed for work in the morning, according to sources.

As they got hungry, three took time off at about 1.30 pm to have lunch, leaving six behind.

Moments afterwards, the building crashed.

Three of the remaining six workers were rescued alive but with bruises and broken limbs while one was brought out dead two hours after the collapse.

Two were still trapped in the debris at press time.

One of those feared dead is named Eghosa, a welder said to have been hired for a job at the ill-fated structure.

His brother, Osasu, said their father died only last December.

Elvis Egbe, an auto-mechanic said one of his apprentices was among the survivors.

He said: "I heard my boy, Victor, was among those in the building. I rushed down and joined in the rescue operation. One had a broken leg."

A rescuer who gave his name as Okunbor said: "I heard people shouting that there was a collapsed building. We rescued three and three are still inside. It was nine of them but three left."

One of the lucky survivors who refused to give his name said: "They asked us to demolish the building. We didn't have money to eat and a boy later requested to take us out for lunch.

"The church asked us to bring down the building. We were done with the upper part. We were removing the blocks but we came and saw the building on them. This is my first day. We did not see the pastor and others again. They were here when the building collapsed."

Policemen prevented the mob from setting the main church building ablaze.

The General Overseer of the Church, Apostle Joshua Osasuyi, is yet to comment on the incident.