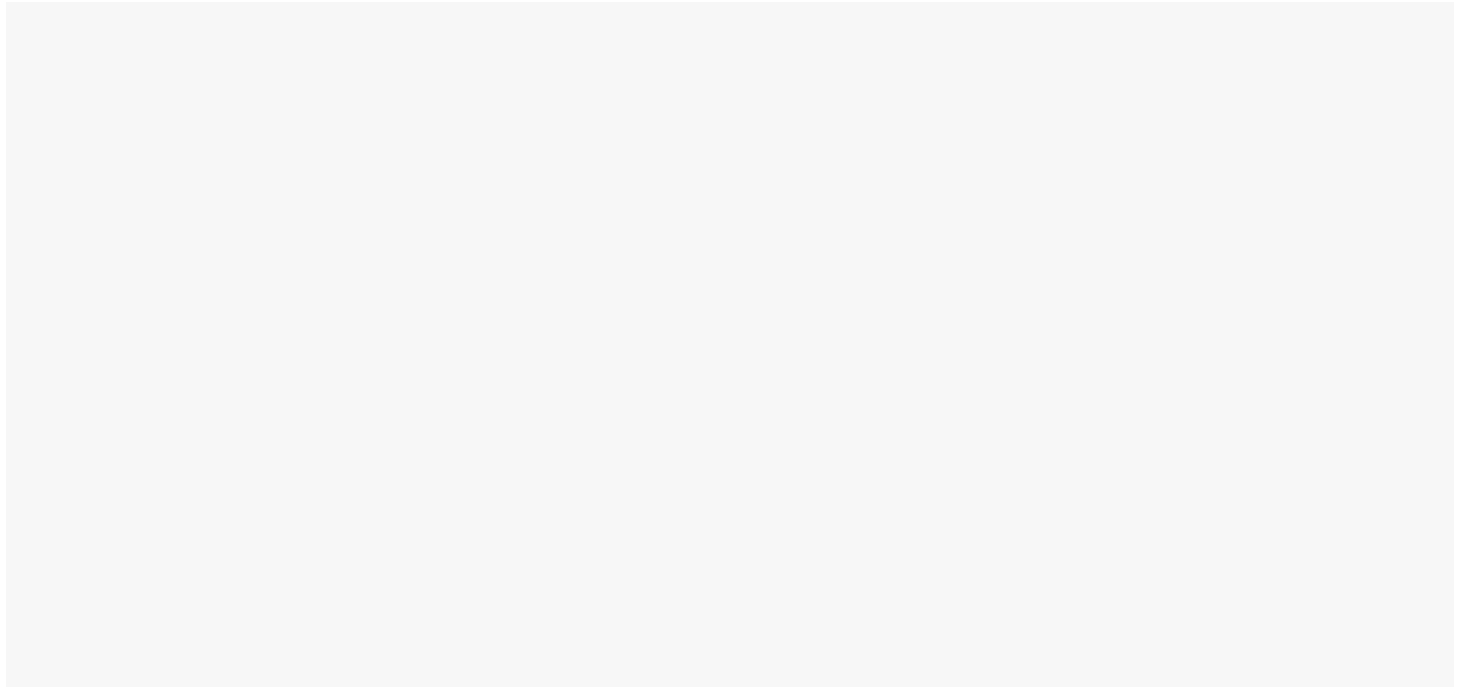


18 die, 41 injured in Lagos Island building collapse



by **Tajudeen Adebajo, Olatunde Odebiyi and Kofoworola Belo-Osagie** March 14, 2019



•LUCKY ONES: Some of the pupils rescued from the rubble...yesterday



No fewer than 18 persons died yesterday when a four-storey building collapsed on Lagos Island. Forty-one others were injured.

The incident occurred at No 14, Massey Street, Opposite Oja, Ita-Faaji.

The building, housing Ohen Private Nursery and Primary School on its third floor, caved in at about 10:20am, trapping scores of pupils.

Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Jide Idris, who confirmed the casualty figure, said many of the rescued were taken to Lagos Island General Hospital, Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) and Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), among others.

The Nation learnt that the large number of casualties sparked a shortage of blood with the general hospital calling for donors.

Idris said rescue efforts will continue today.

According to Lagos State Emergency management Agency (LASEMA) General Manager Adeshina Tiamiyu, over 41 people were rescued from the rubble of the building, which had been marked for demolition since 2014.

An eyewitness, Abayomi Olaniyan, said he was among those rescuing the victims before the official rescue team came.

Olaniyan, said: "Some were rescued alive, some dead. One of the teachers still called shortly that she was on the ground floor of the collapsed building, trapped with 20 pupils.

"Something similar happened around here last year. The issue of building collapse is common here and government must do something about it. Houses will be marked and due for demolition but they will not demolish it; they will renovate it. So many houses here are weak; they are meant to be demolished but they will tell you they are renovating it; they will only paint it."

An eyewitness, Bola Ogunyemi, said: "The pupils were already lined up from their third floor classes when the school owner noticed that the building was cracking. Before the kids could be arranged from their classes, the building had collapsed". The school owner and some kids have been taken to the hospital."

Some youths who are resident in the area were complaining that the rescue efforts were slow.

Since they were told to leave the scene, nobody was removed for about 30 minutes, they said at about 5p.m.

The officers and LASEMA officials, the boys said, were not doing enough.

Some of the boys were recalled to the scene.

The casualties

The school owner was among the first casualties.

She was taken to the General Hospital, where she died after efforts by the medicals to save her proved abortive.

A distraught mother of two victims urged the rescuers to help bring out her son, Luqman, from the rubble.

The woman's daughter, Tobi, had earlier been rescued.

Among the victims is a woman, who called his brother that she was still trapped.

She told her brother that the caterpillar was on their floor, pleading that it should be moved back

“I am under the caterpillar. Help tell the driver to move back,” the victim under the rubble told her troubled brother.

An expectant woman was among those that were pulled out of the rubble alive. A man, who was trapped in the building, was said to have come home to eat. He was yet to be rescued as at press time.

A man, Bashiru Alagbala, who came to visit his wife, was brought out dead.

A family of four – father, mother, son and grandson – was also trapped. Father, mother and grandson were rescued but the son was said to be still under the rubble.

A source told *The Nation* that one of the dead was a pupil, who turned 10 yesterday.

The source said: “Today (yesterday) is his birthday and it is unfortunate that he died today. I learnt that he told his mother that he did not want to go to school today (yesterday). His mother must have seen him as a lazy boy. Sometimes, these little children see what we adults do not see. His mother should have talked about why he did not want to go to school, but I learnt his mother forced him to go and he died. She must be regretting that now.”

Another source said a pair of twin brothers was also trapped in the building. One was said to have died; the other was rescued alive with serious injuries.

A woman, who refused to be named, said her daughter, Azeezat, was still trapped in the rubble. She said she had been to all the hospitals but did not find her.

A former teacher in the school, Bukola Salami, said the building had been shaking since last year.

“I worked in the school for six months and I resigned last December because the building was shaking. When I was in the school, I used to hear sounds as if someone was throwing stones from the walls. The building cracks and the walls shake at times. I told the school owner about my observations, I told her to relocate the school elsewhere, but she said there was no money for the school to be relocated. I resigned last year because of the fear that someday the building might collapse.”

Where are the victims?

A nurse at Massey Street Children Hospital, Lagos Island, told *The Nation* that some of the victims brought to the hospital were given first aid and transferred to other hospitals for proper medical care.

The Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Health, Titi Gonclaves, told reporters at the Lagos Island General Hospital that five of the 20 early casualties were transferred to other hospitals after being attended to.

At the entrance of the hospital was pasted 41 names of the stable survivors: 22 females, 17 males. Two were unidentified.

Crowd hampered rescue, says Health Commissioner

Commissioner for Health Jide Idris confirmed the casualty figures of 18 deaths and 41 injured.

He lamented that the large number of spectators slowed down rescue efforts and he could not give a definite casualty figure until today.

Idris said: "Our doctors and nurses are working round the clock. A lot of them were mobilised from different hospitals down here. Doctors from federal institutions are also assisting because of the seriousness of this incident.

"We will not be able to give full information now until tomorrow (today) morning. Some have been taken to LASUTH, LUTH and we don't know if more people will be rescued.

"The state of things now is getting calm than earlier because there were a lot of emotions.

The medical teams have done their best. It would have been done better and faster but for the crowd.

"So far all we care is to bring people out alive."

General Hospital seeks blood donors

The Lagos Island General Hospital was last night calling for voluntary blood donors.

The hospital's Blood Donor Clinic said it had received 50 pints of blood at press time, with more people responding to the call.

An official at the clinic, Akin, thanked the donors.

“Most of the victims brought here today (yesterday) are casualties and most of the blood donated here are majorly used for casualties.

“We screen for our donors, we check for TTI and PCV, then we check to know if the donor is fit.

The minimum requirement for a female donor is 38 percent at least, while male is 40 percent upwards. Then we also check if the female donor is not on her period, we check for malaria and other tests; if they are fit, we start the procedure.

“Blood is life, we thank the blood donors for coming out *en masse* to support the hospital and the government,” Olojo told *The Nation*.

Ambode orders probe, takes over victims’ medical expenses

Lagos State Governor Akinwunmi Ambode commiserated with families of the victims and promise to pay the victims’ medical bills.

Ambode, who visited the scene of the incident at about 2:42pm, described the incident as “unfortunate”.

He urged residents to allow rescuers space to carry out their operations.

Ambode said: “I want to commiserate with the families of those that lost their lives in this collapsed building. I want to quickly let Lagosians know that this is quite an unfortunate incident. All we are trying to do is to scale up this rescue operation.

“Our response units are already here; we are getting additional cranes to be able to go deeper than where we are now to rescue more lives.

“I just want to appeal to people that when we are doing this kind of rescue operation, yes, sympathisers will naturally come, but I want to appeal that they should give the rescue workers the chance to save more lives.”

The Governor said his Deputy, Dr. Mrs. Oluranti Adebule, was visiting hospitals where some of the victims rescued had been taken to.

“The Deputy Governor is in the hospital actually taking care of those that were rescued and taken to the hospital, most especially the children. We will immediately take care of whatever it is that we can do, including the hospital bills.

“All we are interested in now is to save more lives and also see how those that have been rescued are put in proper place and proper care,” Ambode said.

‘Several buildings marked for demolition’

Ambode said he had received information that the building was residential, with the school operating illegally within the premises.

He said most of the buildings in the area had been marked for demolition but that some property owners defied such notices. Structurally defective buildings would be demolished, he stressed, adding:

“The first observation is that this is an old building and it is only the penthouse and the other floors that we have been able to use to rescue people.

“So far, from what I have been briefed, we have rescued about 25 people and some already dead but we were earlier informed that it was a school; the building is not technically a school; it is a residential building that was actually accommodating an illegal school, so to speak, on the second floor.

“Like we have said, we have been carrying out a lot of integrity tests on the buildings in this neighborhood and, as you can see, some of them have been marked for demolition but we get resistance from landlords, but we must continue to save lives and we would intensify our efforts to see that those that have failed our integrity test, we would ensure that they are quickly evacuated and we’ll bring the structures down,” he said.

Ambode also said a probe would be carried out immediately rescue operations are concluded. Those found culpable, he promised, will be dealt with in accordance with the laws.

“This is unfortunate but we will investigate what has happened and also see the punishment for whoever are the culprits.

“That is the secondary level but the most important thing right now is to save lives and I just appeal to people that they should give us the chance to save more lives,” he said.

Responding to a concern raised by a resident on the increase in illegal schools in the area, Ambode said all schools that fall within that category would be closed down.

‘Why LASEMA couldn’t bring in heavy equipment’

LASEMA General Manager Adeshina Tihamiyu said the environment did not allow the agency to bring in bigger equipment.

He said: “So far, over 40 people have been rescued by joint efforts of the community. They had rescued many people and we came and joined them with the efforts of other agencies.

“The work we have done here today has been by the help of this community and those of us in the official rescue team. They had been rescuing people before we came. We are trying to decide where to rescue them from. But we are doing our best.

“We must get to the bottom of the building, and account for everybody that they claim is in the building.”

Private owners disown school

Two main private school associations – the Association for Formidable Educational Development (AFED) and the National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) – denied any link with the collapsed school.

The National President of AFED, the umbrella group of private schools for low-income earners, Mr Emmanuel Orji, said the group had no records of the school’s membership.

“We have tried searching for information about the school. I don’t think it is one of our members,” he told The Nation on phone.

In the past, the government had clamped down on AFED schools for not being registered or operating according to laid down rules and regulations.

Orji said the space constraints in the densely populated area where the collapsed school was located may have limited the choice of properties available to use for schools.

SOME OF THE SURVIVORS

- **Rasheed Lasbat (f)**
- **Ogunsanwo Olumide (m)**
- **Adeyemo Kehinde (f)**
- **Adedoyin Rukayat (f)**

- **Sanusi Rukayat (f)**
- **Sulaimon Baraka (f)**
- **Rasheed Shukurat (f)**
- **Komolafe Saidat (f)**
- **Unknown (f)**
- **Unknown (m)**
- **Unknown (m)**
- **Hassan Omotolani (f)**
- **Abimbola Faruq (m)**
- **Alabi Qayum (m)**
- **Afolabi Rodiat (f)**
- **Olawusi Rokibat (f)**
- **Alawu Tayibat (f)**
- **Adedoyin Kehinde**
- **Unknown**
- **Rasheed Labat (f)**
- **Noimot Tise (f)**
- **Alabi Kabiru (m)**
- **Shasore Kabiru (m)**
- **Ogunsanwo Daniel (m)**
- **Owolabi Ayomide (m)**
- **Ayeni Faruq (m)**
- **Amoo Khalid (m)**
- **Unknown (Iya Ope) (f)**
- **Johnson Esther (f)**
- **Hassan Jamiu (m)**
- **Ajibade Saratu (f)**
- **Unknown (f)**
- **Samuel Esther (f)**

- **Adesegiri Kemi (f)**
- **Wasiu Segun (m)**
- **Ayeni Asabi (f)**
- **Alabi Kabiru (m)**
- **Mubarak Olayinka (m)**
- **Hassan Jamiu (m)**
- **Ayanbola Demola (m)**
- **Afolabi Samiat (f)**



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