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# Policewoman, two children die in Lagos collapsed buildings

- Nine victims rescued

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***By Precious Igbowelundu and Halima Balogun***

Police Constable attached to Ikoyi Division, Risikat Balogun and two children were yesterday killed while nine other persons were in critical condition after two buildings collapsed in Lagos. The incident occurred at 16 and 17 Freeman Street, Lagos Island around 2am.

Witnesses said a defective three-storey building was the first to cave-in, adding that it collapsed on a family sleeping inside a nearby bungalow killing a seven-year-old boy, Abdulsalam Balogun.

While some of the occupants including a pregnant woman were rescued before emergency workers arrived the scene, it was gathered that the unnamed Policewoman and a three-year-old boy identified as Paul were later brought out dead.

The policewoman, witnesses said, was found trapped near the exit of the building as she was apparently trying to escape when she got crushed by the structure.

According to residents, victims of the collapsed building recently moved into the neighbourhood as previous tenants were evicted on grounds that repairs were to be undertaken only for the new occupants to be brought in as renovation was ongoing.



An eyewitness, Risikat Ope said she heard people shouting around 2am and when she came out to check what was going on, she saw the building coming down.

"The boys in the area and the neighborhood police were already trying to rescue people when I came out.

They first brought out four people and out of the four people, there was one dead body there then they brought out one small child who was also dead.

"Later, around 5am, fire service came and when they came, the boys told them that there were still four people underneath.

When they brought them out, another person died so that makes it three people that died there. There are seven people in General Hospital.

There are two siblings there at a private hospital here in Oshodi, Hakeem Hospital, one of them is dead and the other is still receiving treatment at the hospital.

The child that died, Paul, today is his third birthday, and his older sibling is five-year-old. There are four shops there – one lady has a depot there.

A tailor's shop is also there and that of another woman selling rice. There are four people at the pent house, it seems they have been told to vacate that house before," she said

Allison Gabriel, a resident of the collapsed bungalow described the incident as unfortunate, blaming the government for not taking action for over two years.

He said the high rise building had been defective for over two years and the government knew but did nothing about it.

"I was sleeping and I heard people shouting, I woke up and luckily for me I found myself outside and even at that I had to put myself together and help people.

The Lagos State government has known this three-storey building was defective over two years ago but did nothing.

Here we are today. I do not know what went wrong. They did a kind of slight plastering and painting and let it out.

"Those people that became victims of this property are new tenants. The fault of the government has led to the damages of our own property.

Before partial renovation started, parts of the building were already dropping because one of my neighbours complained often times.

The owner of the property is not staying in the building so we do not really know who to complain to. The father of the seven-year-old boy tried to rescue him but he couldn't.

When the building fell, there was complete shock and the man dropped the kid to go out a little bit. Unfortunately, the emergency workers got here late.

They came around past 8am and we were unable to rescue the poor child. The first response we got was the fire service around 3am but the LASEMA came around 8am," Allison said.

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☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

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A woman who sells drinks, Salawat lamented that she lost goods worth over N1.5m to the collapse, adding that she rented the shop around last August.

She said she neither knew the building was marked for demolition nor was she served any quit notice, weeping hopelessly.

Another woman, Risikat Oyebanji who owned a tailoring shop cried out that she could not pick anything out. Rescuers from the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Police, Lagos State Ambulance Service (LASAMBUS), Fire Service, Lagos Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC), Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and the Lagos State Building Control Agency, were at the scene.

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Director General (DG) LASEMA, Dr. Femi Oke-Osanyintolu confirmed three bodies were recovered dead and nine others rescued.

Oke-Osanyintolu said his men arrived the scene around 4:05am and discovered the three-storey building totally collapsed on people sleeping. He said: "Nine victims have been extricated from the rubble alive while three bodies were recovered.

Their remains were transported to the mortuary by SEHMU while pre hospital care has been administered to the rescued victims by LASEMA and LASAMBUS."