

METRO

...CRIME, SECURITY, COURT

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Pregnant woman, school proprietress, pupils, residents die as building collapses in Lagos



Lagos State governor, Akinwunmi Ambode at the scene

By **Olalekan Olabulo,**
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It was wailing on Massey, Ita Faji and Apatira streets on the island of Lagos State on Wednesday, as more than a dozen school pupils and residents died when a three-storey building and a penthouse collapsed in the area.

More than 14 people, including the proprietress of a school in the building, and a pregnant woman were as at Wednesday afternoon reportedly killed in the incident.

More than 10 school pupils, including a set of twins, were also reported dead.

Some senior students of the school had reportedly been taken out to the On-ola area of the Island for sports when the incident occurred.

The building, situated at 63 Massey Street, directly opposite Ifa Faji market, was used as a school and for residential purpose.

It was gathered that the building was distressed and had been marked for demolition by officials of the Lagos State Building Control Agency.

The school, Ohen Nursery School, was reportedly moved to the collapsed building some years ago after some parents complained of the condition of the building it was initially using.

Parents of pupils and residents of the building were seen around the scene of the rescue operation, hop-

ing that their children and relatives would be rescued.

Nigerian Tribune gathered that the building caved in at about 10:00 a.m., when the students had already settled in their classrooms.

A resident of the collapsed building, confirmed to the **Nigerian Tribune** that the building was marked for demolition, but the developer found a way to stop it.

The resident, who said that he was at work when he received the news of the incident, also stated that the developer did some renovations works on the building two years ago.

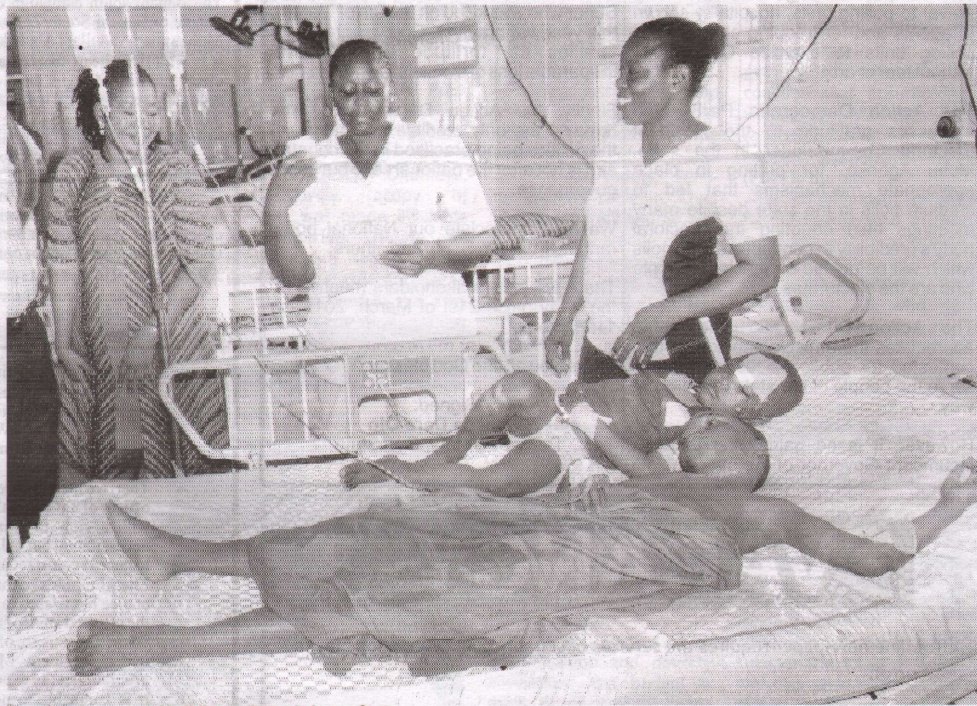
Also, a resident of the area, who simply identified himself as Adewale Owoso told the **Nigerian Tribune** that "it was like a bomb. We were just sitting down in front of the school when we heard a loud bang.

"We all ran into different directions, but when we came back to ourselves, we realised that it was a school that collapsed.

"We quickly mobilised and began some rescue operation; and we rescued more than 20 people before the emergency workers arrived."

A woman, identified as Iya Mola, said: "Many people didn't even know that there was a school there, but I know that they called the school 'Aunty Esther School.

"That was the third place that the school would be relocating to in that area. It occupied a decked building



Crowd at the scene of building collapse in Lagos State.



an excavator working through rubbles in search of survivors. PHOTO: SYLVESTER OKORUWA.

in front of its present location, but the school proprietress relocated them to the collapsed building."

Another resident of the area, who simply identified

himself as Taofeek said "the building was very weak and it was marked for demolition about two years ago."

Taofeek also added that some of the residents had

packed out of the building. Another resident, Sodiq told the **Nigerian Tribune** that "it was first marked for demolition in 2011, but the owner managed to prevent

the demolition. "Somehow, the building was renovated about three years ago, but it was still

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visible that it was defective. The ongoing drainage construction might have caused the collapse of the building."

Seventeen of the rescued pupils and occupants of the building were taken to Massey Hospital, very close to the scene, while others were taken to the Lagos Island General Hospital on Broad Street.

A worker at the Massey Hospital, who spoke with the *Nigerian Tribune* under the condition of anonymity, said that four out of those who were taken to Massey Hospital had died as of Wednesday afternoon.

She also said that six of those rushed to the general hospital had also reportedly died around the same time.

The General Manager

of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Adesina Tihami, while speaking with newsmen at about 4:00p.m., on Wednesday, said that 40 people had been rescued as at that time.

Esinlokun, while speaking with journalists, said that the state government would ensure that victims of the incident were treated free.

As of the time of filing these reports, officials of LASEMA, Lagos State Fire Service, Federal Fire Service, Lagos State Ambulance Service and Julius Berger Plc were on ground to rescue those still trapped under the rubbles of the building.

Amode commiserates with victims' family, promises to assist
Meanwhile, Governor

Akinwunmi Ambode visited the scene of the collapse where he was briefed by the officials.

Ambode, who commiserated with the victims' families, said government would take assessment of distressed buildings in the metropolis and determine their structural stability.

He also assured the families of the victims that government would support them in the time of their travails.

"While we appreciate the efforts of the public in the rescue mission, we urge you to please give room to the rescue teams to have access to the building in their rescue efforts.

"We thank all of you, the security agencies that responded to this tragedy. We will do everything possible to ensure that we rescue those that are still trapped," Ambode assured.

Buhari sympathises with victims' families

President Muhammadu Buhari has said that he is extremely saddened by the collapse.

According to a statement issued by the Special Adviser to the President (Media and Publicity), Femi Adesina, the president sympathised with the parents and relations of the deceased, wishing them God's comfort.

He also wished the injured speedy and complete recovery.

Buhari commiserated with the government and good people of Lagos State, and pledges assistance of the Federal Government as may be required by the state.

We pray for the deceased, survivors —UK

The British Deputy High

Commissioner in Nigeria, Harriet Thompson, also said that she was shocked and saddened by news of the building collapse.

"My thoughts and prayers are with those who have been rescued, those still trapped and the rescue team. I hope there will be more survivors," she said.

Atiku commiserates with building collapse victims

Presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and former Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar, has said that he was saddened by the tragic loss of lives, following the collapse of the building.

Abubakar, who said he could feel the pains and loss of the victims' families, having bid their children and family members farewell in the morning and

not being able to welcome them back home again.

In a statement signed by his media adviser, Paul Ibe, "Atiku Abubakar, on behalf of his family, expresses his deepest condolences to the families and friends of those affected by this tragedy.

"He prays for comfort and strength for the affected families, as they mourn the loss of their priceless jewels."

The PDP presidential candidate said that no resources should be spared in rescuing those children who might still be trapped in the rubbles, and in treating the injured.

He also called for investigation into what might have led to the collapse of the building, saying that appropriate sanctions should be applied, to stem the incessant collapse of buildings in the country.