

Four-year-old, female corps member, eight others killed as three-storey building collapses in Lagos

Building collapse rate now embarrassing —Buhari

From Dayo Ayeyemi, Kehinde Akintola and Leon Usigbe

TEN people, including a four-year-old and a female corps member, were killed, while 22 others were rescued alive, with two others seriously injured when a building collapsed at Ebute-Meta area of Lagos State on Sunday night.

Nigerian Tribune learnt that out of the 23 people rescued, 22 were males, with one female, while some bodies out of those who died have been released to their relatives.

It was initially reported that eight persons were killed, but the bodies of the four-year-old and female corps member were discovered on Monday.

The Zonal Coordinator, South-West, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mr Ibrahim Farinloye, confirmed the development to newsmen in Lagos.

He said: "Two additional bodies, including that of a four-year-old boy and a female youth corps member, had been recovered, making 10 deaths.

"The number of rescued occupants remains 23, while six males and four females have been so far recovered dead."

The building, located on Number 24, Ibadan Street, Ebute Meta, was said to have been marked and sealed for demolition by officials of the Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA) due to its precarious state almost two years ago.

The markings meant early warnings were issued to the owner of the building and occupants before the incident occurred.

The building finally caved in at about 9.30 p.m. on Sunday, trapping the majority of its occupants, according to a resident of the area.

This latest incident is coming barely six months after a 21-storey building collapsed in Ikoyi, leaving 44 people dead.

Speaking with the *Nigerian Tribune*, a resident of a nearby building said the majority of

the people in the neighbourhood were indoor when the building collapsed.

She added that they heard a loud sound as if something exploded before they all rushed out to see what it could be.

The source, who did not want her name in print, said: "We are not eyewitnesses because we were not there when the building collapsed. What we heard was a loud bang like an explosion and we rushed out. Immediately, some people made distress calls to the relevant authorities and they responded."

Nigerian Tribune gathered that the majority of the occupants were aware of the dangerous state of the building, having been served several notices to relocate, while meetings were also held with them by the building's owner to look for alternative accommodation.

Confirming the number of casualties, the Lagos State

Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Dr Olufemi Osanyintolu, said: "We were able to rescue 22 people alive, two were severely injured. The two severely injured were transferred to the Lagos State Teaching Hospital for further treatment.

"The majority of the people rescued were males. We have 21 males and one female. We recovered eight bodies and they were taken to the mortuary. Out of the eight bodies taken to the mortuary, seven bodies had been released to their relatives."

Speaking about the status of the building before it eventually collapsed, Osanyintolu said the government had earlier warned about the building by serving the owner and occupants several notices to evacuate.

While sympathising with those who lost their beloved ones, Osanyintolu described the incident as "a man-made

disaster" due to the early warning notices to the owner and occupants to relocate.

Secretary to the Pa Similola family, the original owner of the building, Mr Johnson Oluoyomi Adejare, said the family discovered that one of the Lagos State government's agencies had served several papers on occupants of the building.

He said it was at that point that the family took steps and had several meetings with the developer and occupants to let them know that the building was no longer habitable.

Adejare said: "At this point, the family took steps and had meetings with occupants in respect to the notices.

"We held one meeting with them in January 2022 and another in February, and despite the fact that the agency came to serve them notices to leave, we even gave them money to leave, but they were adamant."

Meanwhile, officials of the

Lagos State Building Collapse Agency (LABCA) have begun the evacuation of occupants of two sets of three-storey buildings showing serious signs of distress in the locality.

One of the buildings had been marked before now, while the other was just marked for demolition on Monday.

The two buildings were about 200 metres away to the scene of the three-storey building that collapsed on Sunday night.

In fact, it took the intervention of the nearby neighbours, who protested that occupants should be given at least 24 hours notice to relocate before the bulldozer of LABCA was stopped from immediately pulling down one of the identified distressed buildings.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government on Monday tasked regulatory agencies in charge of housing on the need to ensure that building construction meet the highest standards in order to curb the spate of building collapse across the country.

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq, who gave the charge via a statement issued in Abuja, sympathised with the Lagos State government and families of victims who lost their lives in the Ebute Meta incident.

Farouq decried the spate of

unavoidable disasters in the country and called on concerned authorities to work assiduously towards risk and disaster reduction.

President Muhammadu Buhari has commiserated with the families of those who died, sustained injuries, and were affected in the building collapse at Ebute Meta area.

While noting that search and rescue was still ongoing at the site, the president expressed pain over the incident, observing that the frequency of building collapse in the country has become embarrassing.

According to a statement issued by the Special Adviser to the President (Media and Publicity), Femi Adesina, the president has, therefore, called on stakeholders to work with professionals to put a halt to the trend.

The statement reads: "The president, who is pained by this tragic incident, salutes the courage and determination of the first responders, national and sub-national emergency agencies in Lagos State, and compassionate Nigerians, whose immediate action in the aftermath of the collapse of the three-storey building led to the rescue of several persons, including many children.

"Regrettably, the president notes that the frequency of building collapses in the country has become increasingly embarrassing.

Police boss orders DPOs, area commanders to deal with MC Oluomo, Istijabah, others over violent clashes

Olalekan Olabulo | Lagos

THE Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Alabi, has directed all Area Commanders and Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) to deal with popular transport union chiefs, Musiliu Akinsanya, popularly known as MC Oluomo, Azeez Abiola, a.k.a Istijabah, and their supporters over the incessant clashes between the two groups.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO),

Benjamin Hundeyin, in a statement on Monday, said the commissioner of police had met with the two union leaders separately and warned them against breaching public peace in the state.

Hundeyin said: "The Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Alabi, has warned that anyone found fomenting trouble anywhere within Lagos would be promptly apprehended and made to face the law."



Rescue workers retrieving a body from the collapsed building at Ebute-Meta, Lagos, on Monday.