

39 Feared Dead At Stampede In Port Harcourt

By Amaechi Okonkwo - P... On May 29, 2022

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OVER 39 persons are feared dead, with many others injured following a stampede at the Polo Club in Port Harcourt on Saturday morning.

The incident occurred during a free shopping programme organised by Kings Assemblies Church in Port Harcourt.

The programme was organised to help the underprivileged get gifts including food items, free of charge.

As of the time of filing this report, over 39 dead bodies were reported to have been counted and these included that of a pregnant lady and three children.

The incident has been blamed on poor crowd management by the organisers and impatience on the part of the crowd as everyone was apparently in a rush to get ahead of others.

As of the time of this report, some of the organisers of the programme have been arrested including the church's legal adviser whose name was not given.

A member of the church who witnessed the incident confirmed the death figure but blamed the impatience of a majority of people in the crowd for the incident.

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Another eyewitness said thousands of people gathered at the venue as early as 2.00 am and were trying to force their way into the premises resulting in a stampede.

She said: “A nursing mother with her newborn baby of about four months were victims. I had to leave the event when I saw the increasing number of people rushing to get things free. There was no crowd control. Ambulances, policemen and other security agencies have been rushing the injured and evacuating the dead bodies from the scene.”

However, the state Police Command while confirming the incident said 31 persons died.

The acting Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the command, Grace Iringe-Koko, said that the stampede must have occurred when the people who had gathered struggled to have items, resulting in the death of the 31 persons.

Buhari's reaction

In a reaction from the presidency, President Muhammadu Buhari says he is extremely saddened by the reported deaths.

He admonished organisers of religious, political and other big events to plan well and carry them out in a disciplined manner to avert similar calamitous deaths and injuries.

The President directed further that “all efforts should be made to provide relief to those injured in the unfortunate incident,” and that disaster and relief agencies of the Federal Government should maintain constant contact with the Rivers State government to ensure that good care is taken of the relief efforts.

He expressed his condolences and that of the nation to the bereaved families and to the government and people of Rivers State and prayed to the Almighty to repose the souls of the deceased.