

Seven people have been reported dead in a stampede that occurred during the sale of seized bags of rice by the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) in Lagos.

Last Thursday, NCS commenced the sale of food items seized from smugglers to ameliorate the economic hardship in the country. Speaking during the flag-off of the exercise, Wale Adeniyi, Comptroller-General of Customs, said the rice to be distributed has been repackaged in 25kg to reach more Nigerians.

Adeniyi added that customs has seized over 20,000 bags of 50kg parboiled rice, beans, maize, millet, and soya beans from smugglers.

To get the 25kg of rice, Nigerians are to pay N10,000 and provide their national identification num-

7 persons die in stampede at Customs rice distribution point in Lagos

ber (NIN)

On Friday, many Nigerians stormed the NCS command located in the Yaba area of Lagos to buy the 25kg bag of rice.

During the exercise, a stampede occurred, and seven people reportedly died and others were injured.

In a short message shared on WhatsApp, the APC leadership in Ward E1 Surulere, Lagos, announced that Adebajo Comfort Funmilayo, one of its members, died during the stampede that occurred at the customs office in Yaba.

"It is with a heavy heart and re-

gret that we announce the painful death of one of our members in WARDE1, Mrs Adebajo Comfort Funmilayo of house number 104, Ibidun street by Akinhanmi street, Ojuelegha," the statement reads.

"She was among the 7 victims that died in the course of buying custom rice at Yaba.

"May God grant all the members of her family and all the residents of WARDE1 the fortitude to bear the irreplaceable loss."

Speaking on the incident to an online news media yesterday, the NCS Public Relations Officer, Abdullahi Maiwada, said the stampede occurred "because Nigerians,

who came for the exercise, did not obey simple instructions for the distribution of the items."

Maiwada said the incident was not due to a "lack of coordination" on the part of the agency, but the "attitude of Nigerians".

"We started an orderly process, and people benefited from it until Nigerians decided not to be orderly and conform to simple instructions and directives. That is what led to what happened," he said.

"The CGC was at that scene from the beginning to the end of that process. He pleaded with them to comply with the simple directive, and that we have more than

enough to distribute.

"Some Nigerians decided to round trip. At a point, we stopped collecting money and started distributing it for free. But Nigerians, in their manner, started round tripping and this is what caused what happened."

Asked to confirm the casualty toll, he said, "I can't confirm. I'm not aware. I don't have any assertive report for now. I neither deny nor confirm. There was a rowdy session.

In fact, I am aware we took some people in our ambulance to the hospital with our medical doctors."

