

December 17th, 2013



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## 10-year-old child, other die as court wall collapses

DECEMBER 17, 2013 BY SAMSON FOLARIN 3 COMMENTS

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**The collapsed wall and Emmanuel**

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No fewer than two people have been confirmed dead, while several others were injured in the Ilasamaja, Oshodi-Isolo area of Lagos State after a dilapidated customary court wall fell on residents on Saturday evening.

Eyewitnesses told *PUNCH Metro* that the court fence had shown signs of weakness for many years and residents had raised the alarm of a possible collapse. They said the government did not act until it became too late.

An eyewitness, who identified herself only as Biodun, said the casualty figure could have been more if she had not warned some children to stop playing around the area.

She said, "It was around 6pm on Saturday evening. I had just told some of the kids, who were around the place, to move inside the house. I said that because I did not want them to injure themselves with their dangerous play. Few minutes after that, I heard a loud noise and saw that the wall had collapsed to the ground.

"A boy, who was running an errand for someone in the neighbourhood, was hit in the head and died instantly. A married woman, who sold provisions was also badly hit and was rushed to the hospital. Four others are in critical conditions in the hospital; three of them are children of the same parent."

Biodun added that the woman who was taken to the hospital and later identified as Eugunia Obinaeri, died on Sunday evening.

She said angry youths in the area went on rampage and destroyed the rest of the court walls before they were restrained by policemen.

*PUNCH Metro* visited the scene and observed that the collapsed court wall demarcated it from residential blocks. A walkway, which connects residents to other streets, divides the wall and the residential blocks.

A school building is in front of the wall. Some residents said more children might have died if the incident had not happened on a weekend.

When our correspondent visited the home of the Obinaeris on Oguntokun Street, he met relatives and family members. The atmosphere was sober.

The husband of the deceased, Marcellinus Obinaeri, was said to have been too distraught to speak.

The family members also declined speaking, until "a convenient time."

At the home of the 10-year-old victim, Emmanuel Nwafor, our correspondent observed that his pictures were put at the entrance of his parent's one-room apartment.

The bereaved father, Herbert Nwafor, 54, told *PUNCH Metro* that his three-member family had only moved into the area three days before tragedy struck.

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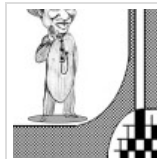


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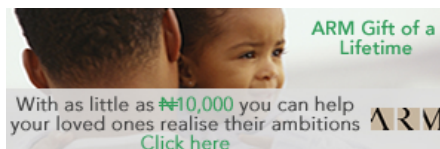
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He said, "We just arrived here three days ago. I strolled out on that Saturday evening, and later, my phone rang and I was told my only son had died. When I got there, I saw my son lying down dead. He was in primary four and was not just my only son, but the only son in my entire family."

Emmanuel's mother, Sylvanus, while fighting back tears, told our correspondent the deceased boy died after he was rejected by three different hospitals.

"I was frying what I will sell in the market. Somebody sent him on an errand, and he had just crossed from the gate of the house when the wall fell on him. I ran out, and carried him. Somebody took him from my hand, and together we took him to the hospital. Three different hospitals rejected him, and we took him back to the court, dead," she said.

The Chairman, Oshodi-Isolo LCDA, Shamusideen Olaleye, said the council had the challenge of funding the only health centre and the customary court in the area at the same time, and had chosen the health centre because it had recently been attacked by armed robbers.

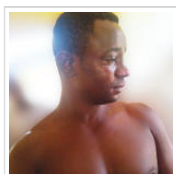
He said, "We didn't have enough funds at the time when we heard of the needs of both the health centre and the customary court. We chose the health centre over it, not knowing the depth of the need of the customary court. And since there was no rain or thunder storm, we didn't suspect anything like that would happen. It was just too unfortunate and we are taking measures to forestall the occurrence of such in the future."

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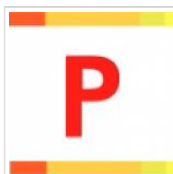
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