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Missing construction worker worries Oworonshoki residents

APRIL 29, 2014 BY OLALEYE ALUKO LEAVE A COMMENT

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The collapsed structure

Residents around a collapsed building in the **Oworonshoki area of Lagos** fear that a construction worker may be lying dead in the rubble, OLALEYE ALUKO reports

Although nine persons are said to have been rescued from a building that collapsed on **Sand Beach Lane, in the Oworonshoki area of Lagos**, residents still suspect that a corpse may be lying in the rubble.

Last Thursday, around 11am, the two-storey building collapsed while construction work was going on, leaving about 10 people trapped – including three children – in the rubble for awhile. After efforts by government agencies such as the Lagos State

Emergency Management Authority and the National Emergency Management Authority, the victims, who were seriously injured, were taken to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital for medical attention.

On Sunday afternoon, when our correspondent visited the area, some people staying around the sand beach said there were strong indications that there was a dead body still lying under the rubble.

One of them, Mr. Kazeem Hassan, said, "We were the ones who first rushed to the building to bring out the workers. We initially rescued eight persons and we were on the ninth victim when the government ambulances arrived. But I can tell you that there is still a dead person in the structure."

To buttress his claim, Hassan explained that on the second day after the incident, relatives of a carpenter, who was also working on the site before the collapse, came to them and lamented that the man had not returned home.

"We were afraid to tell them that he might be in the rubble, because we don't want to be implicated in a crime we did not commit. **So we suspect that the carpenter may be the remaining victim**," another resident, Mr. Abayomi Agbo, added.

Agbo noted that the family of the **missing carpenter** – about 10 persons – came to the area the following day, asking for his whereabouts.

Efforts by this correspondent to get the address or contacts of the carpenter's family were, however, not successful.

But the Chairman of the landlords' association in the area, Chief Kola Balogun, said he was not aware of the visit by the relatives of the alleged missing worker. He, however, called on the government to send officials to clear the debris on the site.

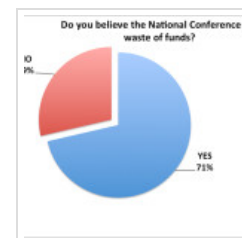
"Our Local Government Chairman, Mr. Babatunde Sofola, and officials of the Lagos State Building Control



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Agency have visited us. But we thought the rubble would have been searched and cleared off. At least this would help to know whether what the residents around the building are claiming is true or not. We therefore advise that this task is urgently done," Balogun remarked.

Another resident and eye-witness, Mr. Yusuf Bello, said the people are afraid to go near the building because no one is authorised to do so. He also believes that a body is trapped in the structure.

"In a matter of days, we may not be comfortable in the area if the corpse is not removed. Actually, I was there that morning and I knew there were no fewer than 10 persons. I left the building a few minutes before the incident, as I was called on phone to come home," Bello said.

At the nearby Oworonshoki Police Station, an officer who spoke on condition of anonymity, because he was not authorised to do so, said the station had yet to receive the report of any missing construction worker.

When contacted, the General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Authority, Dr. Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, said the site was searched thoroughly with sophisticated equipment and that nobody was still trapped.

"The victims we took to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital have already been discharged and taken home. I am assuring you that there is no living person in the rubble. The challenge is that when the incident happened, there was no manifest for us to ascertain the number of people on the construction site. So, people can now be raising a false alarm," Oke-Osanyintolu explained.

The manager added that if construction sites had manifests, there would not be controversies in case of emergencies.

"We are appealing to site engineers to have manifests of people working with them. In case of a collapse building or other emergencies, this will help the government rescue teams to be sure about the number of people and their identities."

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