

## Collapsed building: Victims' relatives protest as death toll hits three

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Scene of the building that collapsed in the Jabi area of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Trapping 10 persons on Friday, August 17, 2018

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Relatives of victims in the four-storey building which collapsed on Friday in Abuja have protested the decision of the Federal Capital Territory Administration to end the rescue operation at the site on Saturday.

They were dispersed by policemen who fired tear gas and shot in the air.

The angry youths insisted that about 18 victims were still trapped under the rubble, but the FCT Administration said there was no indication that anyone was buried under the debris.

The rescue team consisting of officials of FCT Emergency Management Agency, National Emergency Management Agency, firefighters and Julius Berger Plc ended the rescue operation around 8am on Saturday, after they failed to find victims.

But the youths, who were annoyed by the removal of evacuation equipment, attempted to take over the site, insisting that many victims were still trapped under the debris and should be rescued.

A tricycle rider, Mustapha Musa, said his younger brother, Aliu, 23, was among those trapped under the rubble, adding that his elder brother, Ali Mohammed, 30, who was among the victims that were rescued, died on the way to the hospital.

"I have a brother there. Yesterday (Friday) we called our brother and we were talking to him on phone, but he was complaining of the heat. This morning (Saturday), we called him but we did not get him. So the government did not do anything and our people are still under the rubble," he insisted.

But the Coordinator, Abuja Municipal Metropolitan Council, Umar Shuaibu, who was at the scene on Saturday, explained that the rescue workers could not find any signs of life or body, adding that they deployed the necessary equipment for the job.

“We worked overnight with floodlight, we were able to comb out everything and found that there is no single person buried anywhere under this rubble. We combed everywhere even where we don’t expect to have bodies, the machines went and did a professional job.

“Apart from the initial victims; we have one dead and six people injured. Apart from them, no other casualty was discovered,” Shuaibu stated.

The AMMC boss said investigation had commenced to find out possible lapses to prevent a recurrence, adding that the debris would be evacuated.

He warned scavengers to keep off the site, cautioning that anyone found at the scene would be arrested by the security personnel.

The Acting Deputy Director, Forecasting, Response and Mitigation, FCT Emergency Agency Management Authority, Florence Wenegieme, stated that the responders drilled into the core of the collapsed structure but did not find bodies.

She explained that officials had been directed to ascertain the number of the dead and injured victims at the hospital.

Meanwhile, NEMA on Saturday confirmed the death of another victim who was trapped in the building that collapsed on Friday in the Jabi area of Abuja, bringing the death toll from the collapse to three.

This is coming as the agency joined the United Nations to celebrate the 2018 World Humanitarian Day.

The World Humanitarian Day is celebrated on August 19 every year, although it was commemorated on Saturday in Abuja by various agencies of government and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Nigeria.

The Director-General, NEMA, Mustapha Maihaja, who visited the site of the building collapse on Saturday, confirmed “the rescue of seven persons. One person is dead, one critically injured and five others were rescued alive.”

He also confirmed that the rescue operation at the site of the building collapse had been called off.

On Friday, about five persons were rescued shortly after the collapse, but two of them identified as the project engineer and foreman, died shortly after.

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