

Three die as Lagos ministry, police, hoodlums demolish 200 buildings

Deji Lambo 6 June 2022

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Scene of the demolition

Hundreds of landlords and residents have been rendered homeless after officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development alongside security agents and hoodlums demolished about 200 buildings at Oke-Ira community, in the Igbogbo Bayeku Local Council Development Area of the state.

During the 10-hour demolition exercise, three landlords reportedly died from shock.

No fewer than eight landlords, who were also traumatised by the incident, were said to be recuperating in different hospitals.

PUNCH Metro gathered that normal activities were ongoing when the government team stormed the community with three bulldozers around 10am, when some of the landlords and residents had gone to their workplaces.

Without presenting a demolition order, the available landlords and residents claimed that the government officials, led by one Engineer Omotoso, claimed that they were acting on the orders of the state Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

The affected members of the community explained that as the demolition was ongoing, the hoodlums in the team prevented them from retrieving their property.

A landlord in the community, Akinkunmi Olapade, said hundreds of family members were displaced after the demolition.

He said, “The value of my demolished building is N25m. Around 10am, I discovered that some government officials came into the community with policemen, soldiers, hoodlums, and some bulldozers from Lagos State Town Planning.

“I met with the policemen and I was directed to one Engineer Omotoso, who said they were in the community for demolition. Over 100 buildings were demolished on New Life Estate, and the remaining 100 buildings were demolished outside the estate, but still on the Oke Ira Family land.

“They never gave us any notice of demolition; they just came in and started demolishing buildings. As I speak to you, I sleep in my car every day. I left my family at a friend’s place; the room could not contain all of us, so I told them I would find somewhere else to sleep. I have been sleeping in the car.

“The hoodlums injured some of the landlords who were hospitalised. We have recorded two deaths because as they demolished their houses in their presence, they collapsed and were rushed to hospitals, where they died. One of the dead landlords was Mr Omotayo.”

Another landlord, Olakunle Dankuwo, who said his property was worth N27m, demanded justice.

He said, “This incident has set a lot of landlords back; some of the landlords are in shock as they collected loans to acquire the property and now everything is gone.

“I had my family members and an aged grandma living with me. I relocated them to my brother’s place as I am still trying to sort out accommodation. They did not allow us to pick anything from the house despite my grandma begging the hoodlums.

“The hoodlums said the order that they gave them was that nobody should be allowed to take out anything. They demanded a N20,000 bribe to allow us to pick something. I could not stand it when they were demolishing my property; I had to leave the premises.”

Another witness, Shakiru Saidu, said the hoodlums were led by one Germani.

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The 48-year-old said, “The incident happened on Tuesday, May 31, 2022. What happened was that three caterpillars, two Black Marias conveying policemen and three buses conveying officials of the Ministry of Physical Planning and about 200 suspected cultists and hoodlums from Ketu, led by a man identified as Germani, came to Oke Ira community, Igbogbo LCDA.

“The person that led the government team is one Engineer Omotoso, while Germani led the hoodlums. So, when they got there, the cultists and hoodlums spread to the community and started threatening and harassing people with guns. If they see anyone recording any video of the demolition, they threaten and send the person away with guns.

“So, the bulldozers went in and started demolishing buildings without any court order or notice. I have a completed duplex that I built there and they demolished it. I called the head of the land grabbers’ committee in the Ministry of Justice, but he said it was a directive from the governor and he knew nothing about it and that it was only the governor that could stop the demolition.”

The Lagos State indigene explained that the Oke Ira community was not under government acquisition, but a traditional ruler sold land that belonged to the Oke Ira family to a company and the family members challenged the certificate of occupancy that the company was parading over the land.

He said, “Along the line, the company tried to ratify the land it bought, but the argument of the family members was that the company had taken beyond what was ratified for them. So, the matter between the family members and the company is currently in the Ikorodu High Court.

“It was the company that dragged the Oke Ira family members to court, but we don’t know. Maybe they were looking for a shortcut, because the matter is still in court. The company instigated the government officials, the police and the hoodlums to invade the community and demolish buildings.

“Over 200 houses were demolished with bulldozers. They pulled down buildings, including my duplex that I spent about N40m to build. Three people have died because of this demolition that started around 10am; they ended it around 7pm.”

The Adeboruwa of Igbogbo Kingdom, Oba Semiudeen Kasali, during a visit to the community, appealed for calm as he assured the victims of justice.

He said, “I know there is misdeed in what happened, but God will show us the way. To those that have died, it won’t be in vain. God will let them rest in peace. I have the belief that God’s grace is not limited to a place; God will not forsake you.”

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, said he was not aware of the incident.

“But for us to release any policeman to follow people that are going for demolition, then there must be a court order that was duly served,” he added.

The Lagos State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, who confirmed the demolition, denied the involvement of hoodlums.

He said, “It is true; they went to demolish the place because it is government land. So, they went to chase them away from the place; they had no right to be there. The government does not move around with thugs and miscreants.”