

# Six dead in Anambra building collapse

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| By Ikenna Obianeri

Tragedy struck at the Odu-Igbo Market, Ochanja, in the commercial city of Onitsha, Anambra State, on Monday, as no fewer than six people were confirmed dead when a two-storey building collapsed at the market.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered that the building, still under construction, which was meant to serve as a market upon completion, collapsed at about 6:41pm while some of the workers and traders were still inside.

An official of the Anambra State Emergency Management Agency, Ifeoma Ani, who visited the scene on Tuesday, confirmed that six people had so far died in the disaster, while over 20 others who were rescued with various levels of injuries were currently receiving treatment at a nearby hospital.

“About six bodies recovered from the rubble have been deposited at the morgue, while those who sustained varying degrees of injuries were taken to the nearby hospital for medical attention. Rescue efforts are still ongoing,” the SEMA officials said.

Although SEMA officials put the casualty figure at six, traders and residents living around the market said over 10 bodies had been recovered from the rubble and some were still trapped, even as rescue operations were still ongoing as of the time of filing this report.

The eyewitnesses said the building made a loud noise before caving in, thereby creating panic in and around the market environs.

A source said, “There was a thunderous noise around the building in the evening, and after some time, it collapsed. The building caved in while some of the workers were on the roof, constructing the parapet.

“The building also served as a place where some traders displayed their wares. Some of the workers were still inside the building. As of the last count, over 10 bodies had been recovered, while others sustained severe injuries and were rushed to the hospital.

“Some people were rescued but later died before getting to the hospital.”

Following the tragic building collapse, the state governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, who visited the scene on Tuesday, conducted an emergency on-the-spot assessment on the site.

Addressing the people at the scene, the visibly angry governor expressed deep sadness at the incident, describing it as “tragic and an incident that was not supposed to happen.”

Soludo, on his part, announced that 26 individuals had been rescued and hospitalized, while five casualties were recorded, with rescue efforts ongoing to locate those still trapped under the rubble, adding that he was not aware the construction of the building was going on at the market.

He emphasised his commitment to tackling the issue of illegal construction and impunity in the state, revealing that the collapsed building was erected by a private developer without government approval.

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He said, “The contractor, at his own cost, will come and put down the illegal buildings he erected here. They are all going to come down. My government did not approve of this building. We will redesign this area and build it properly.

“All buildings constructed without proper approval will be brought down henceforth, including structures currently under construction at other markets.

“A comprehensive inventory of buildings in Anambra markets and public places will be conducted.

“Markets will undergo integrity tests to identify and remove potentially unsafe structures, and individuals found responsible for illegal construction will face legal consequences.”

He emphasised the importance of prioritizing public safety and vowed to eradicate “the impunity and lawlessness” surrounding unauthorized construction.

The governor revealed further that the hospital bills of those receiving treatment will be undertaken by the government and expressed deep condolences to the families of those who lost their lives.

“We can’t afford to waste one life because of the greed of a few. When investigations are completed, the developer, the chairman of the market, and every other person involved in the disaster will be prosecuted and jailed.

“The remaining building under construction by the same developer, near the collapsed one, will be demolished immediately after rescue operations on the site have been completed,” the governor added.

Also, the Commissioner for Special Duties, Beverly Ikpeazu-Nkemdiche, mourned the victims of the collapse and assured the families that the state government would make sure that no one who was culpable in the disaster would go unpunished.

Earlier, the Chairman of Ochanja Market, Bonaventure Mmuo, pledged to share the governor’s message with all market leaders in the state.

Mmuo, while briefing journalists at the scene, disclosed that the construction of the building was started by the private developer under the Public-Private Partnership about three months ago.

A trader in the market, who identified herself as Ebere, said, “My husband and I sell food items in the market. I did not come to the market yesterday because of the Monday sit-at-home, but my husband was at the market. When I heard about the incident, I rushed to the scene in search of him, but as I speak now, I have yet to find him.”

As of the time of filing this report, the actual cause of the building collapse has not been obtained officially, but while it was attributed to the use of substandard materials in some quarters, others said it was caused by the rush on the job.

**| Ikenna Obianeri**

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