



LASG begins probe as five killed in building collapse

26th July 2024



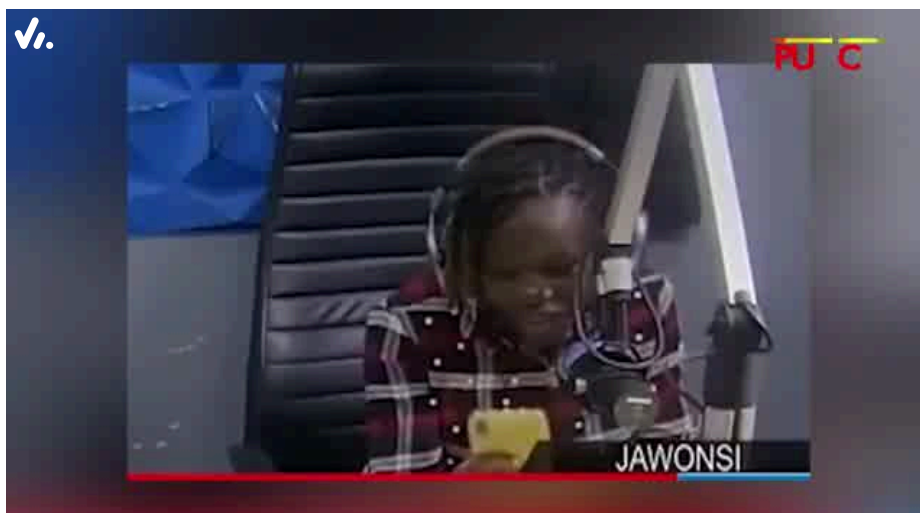
Uthman Salami and Oluwasayo Alabi

The Lagos State Government has initiated an investigation to determine the causes behind the collapse of a two-storey building on Wilson Mba Street, Arowojobe Estate, Maryland, area of the state, which resulted in the death of five construction workers.

The Permanent Secretary of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, confirmed the fatalities in a statement obtained by our correspondent on Thursday noting that five other workers were rescued from the rubble.

Speaking with journalists at the incident site, Olatunde Akinsanya, Director of Operations for LASEMA, stated that the government would be conducting material testing on the building to determine the cause of the collapse.

Akinsanya said, “The initial response effort bore good fruits because we rescued five victims. They were treated, and given first aid and medical treatment before they were transferred to a state hospital in Gbagada.



“Of course, we began the search and rescue operations, and we were able to cut down on the number of casualties. As I speak to you, five adults are dead, and that’s sad. We’re still doing search and rescue to see if other lives are at stake. We switched immediately to ground-zero operations.”

He explained that part of the reinforcements would be taken for material testing to identify the cause of the incident. “So far, no one has come forward to say he or she owns the property. We’re appealing to the owner to come forward,” Akinsanya added.

Some residents, however, told our correspondents, who visited the scene on Thursday morning, that they counted about 10 dead bodies being taken away from under the rubble but were unable to count the number of people rescued.

A security guard named Henry, who lives in a nearby house, said the construction workers were brought to the site from Oyo State by the owner, who is suspected to be living overseas.

Henry stated, “I am a security man. I was in the estate yesterday when I heard the noise and screaming of other residents. It’s a two-storey building. I was there when the rescue officials started bringing out the body. I counted about 10 dead bodies.

“We don’t know whether those who were taken to the hospital will survive the injuries they sustained, but I saw 10 bodies apart from those who were injured. I have been here since morning. I witnessed the whole operation.

“What we don’t know yet is whether there are still more people under the rubble. We will know when the officials resume operation. The workers were from Ibadan. What I discovered is that once the officials begin clearing the rubble and discover a body, they pause for a while before they continue their job.”

Another resident, identified only as Sanjo, criticised the owner of the structure for building on quicksand and for not hiring professionals familiar with the swampy nature of the community.

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He said, “I live on this estate. I’ve been living here for the past 10 years. They started the construction of this building early this year. The place is swampy. All the workers live inside the building because they brought them from Ibadan. Nobody would have died if they had not been staying in the building.

“I have worked with some of the workers in the past. I was the one who made the piling of the building. It was a two-storey building. The owner of the building stays abroad. The building collapsed in the middle of the night. Everyone knows this is a swampy area. I cannot even advise anyone to buy land in this area.”



A female resident, Jumoke Yusuf, whose house is a few metres away from the collapsed building, said she had seen the workers labouring day and night on the structure.

She told our correspondents that she was shocked when she heard people screaming, describing the sound as “like thunder.” Her children, she recalled, came running to her, screaming.

“I noticed that the workers were always on site every day and night. The cause of the collapse may be the swampy area we live in. I’ve lived here for five years. Dr Akpan, who resides in a building opposite the collapsed structure, attended to all the victims immediately before the emergency services came to the rescue,” she said.

Meanwhile, a member of the executive committee and past vice president, the Nigerian Society of Engineers, Mayen Adetiba, expressed concern over the rising cases of collapsed buildings and the use of substandard materials for construction in Nigeria.

She said, “Everything in Nigeria is now so substandard. I have been in this profession for over 50 years, and I have not had any collapse or failure. I don’t want to experience this ever because it can kill, thanks to some regulatory bodies that are not doing their job.

“I’m calling on the Standards Organisation of Nigeria to do its job. The quality of work on sites is also something we should look at. When you don’t use the right professionals with experience, this is the result.

“There is so much quackery, so many quacks running all over the place. The owners of the building believe they can’t get a professional, and that their fees are too expensive, but now the whole thing has collapsed.

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