

Woman, daughter, 6 others die in Lagos church stampede

Police confirm 2 deaths, seal off premises

By **LAWRENCE ENYOGHASU** and **SHINA OGUNBIYI JOSEPH**

A 45-year-old woman and her five-year-old daughter were among the eight people believed to have lost their lives on Thursday in a stampede at the Comfort Life Mission International Church, Ikotun, Lagos during a prayer programme.

It was gathered that the bodies of the yet-to-be-identified woman, her daughter and others were deposited at the Mainland General Hospital mortuary in Yaba.

The police in Lagos confirmed that two people died in the incident. Residents of the area who spoke with Saturday Sun insisted however that no fewer than eight people lost their lives in the incident. The stampede reportedly occurred during a prayer service organised by the church on Thursday.

The police have since cordoned off the place.

Said a resident: "The death toll has increased since yesterday. Some people who attend the church have said that two more women have been declared dead after the initial report. Many people were rushed to different hospitals. I am not surprised if they were declared dead. The crowd was much." A young man in the area told the reporter: "This place is not the church itself. They use this place as a campground. They come here once in a while when they have special programmes. Nobody here attends the church. As per how many died, it is yet to be confirmed to us. Some said that

they are eight, while some just say that they are four."

It was further gathered that the church normally conducts three services during its monthly crusade. An eyewitness who lives in the area, Hakeem Adebayo, said trouble started on Thursday after the first service had ended. "While those worshippers that attended the first service were trying to leave the premises, those coming for the second service were trying to get in, and a stampede ensued," he said. The host pastor, Pastor Odekunle also known as Olorun Ojiji, was arrested by the police at Ikotun and later granted bail on self-recognition, Saturday Sun learnt. Two worshippers were rushed to a hospital in the area, but one of them later died. Some others were rejected by the hospital, it was gathered.

Spokesperson for the Lagos State Police Command, SP Benjamin Hundeyin gave the told the News Agency of Nigeria on Friday that the incident occurred about 11.00 a.m. on Thursday, at the church, located on 13/15, Ewenla Street, Pab Bus stop, Ikotun, Lagos. "The police received a report that there was a stampede during their congregational service at the church on Thursday. As a result of the stampede, five persons slumped and were rushed to Isolo General Hospital for treatment. "A woman of about 45 years old and a five-year old girl, whose identities and addresses are unknown, died. "The scene has been visited, corpses deposited at Mainland General Hospital mortuary, Yaba, for preservation, investigation in progress," he said.