



Home &gt; Features

# Hunger in the land

•How rush for food led to death of 31 in Rivers

30th May 2022 in [Features](#), [Lifeline](#)

0



Scene of the stampede

0 **33**

SHARES VIEWS

[Share on Facebook](#)
[Share on Twitter](#)
[G+](#)
[WhatsApp](#)
[in](#)
[Email](#)
[Share](#)

From **Tony John**, Port Harcourt

**At least 31 persons tragically lost their lives last Saturday in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Unfortunately, it was at a public giveaway event aimed at helping those in need.**

The event turned sour as several members of the public lost their lives in what appeared to be poor crowd control by a new generation church, organizers of the programme. It was in a stampede that preceded the commencement of the programme, which was scheduled for 9am.



•Abandoned personal effects

**Are you a Man 40 yrs and above? Do not miss the Vital Information, it goes off in 2 days! [CLICK HERE to READ](#) .**

The incident occurred at Polo Club field, Port Harcourt. It was gathered that the venue was chosen in a bid to accommodate a larger audience. But it still didn't solve the problem as the crowd surged and became uncontrollable.

The church, identified as The Kings Assembly, is located in the GRA axis of Port Harcourt. The programme was a yearly giveaway event, tagged "Shop for Free."

According to sources, items usually distributed to the public by the church included foodstuff, shoes, clothes and other necessities. Saturday's event was supposed to be the fourth edition of the programme.

**Breaking!!! Earn up to N2 - N3 million monthly GUARANTEED (all paid in US Dollars). No training or refereal required. Do business with top USA companies like Amazon, Tesla, Facebook, IBM, Netflix, Zoom, etc. [Learn more](#) .**

It was gathered that members of the public tried to force their way through the pedestrian gate as early as 5am. The main gate, which was locked, was forced open, resulting in a stampede and, eventually, the deaths recorded.

arrived as early as 5am on Saturday morning for an event that was supposed to start by 9am. But we were here and I saw people trying to enter. Everybody was trying to enter at the same time.”

**Premature Ejaculation & "Small Joystick" Resolved in 7Days... [Click Here For Details](#) .**

Another witness, Margaret Johnson, gave a vivid account of what she saw. She said the surging crowd frightened her, which made her reluctant to enter the premises.

Johnson said: “I heard on the radio that Kings Assembly was giving out things to people. I got there after 5am. And when I arrived, people were too many.

“And the Polo Club security men did not not know the procedure to control the crowd. And people were shouting and begging the security men to open the gate. They (security men) refused. They did not open the gate and the crowd was increasing and increasing.

“The crowd managed to push the small gate open. The big one (main gate) was not opened. As they were pushing the gate, people started falling. Pregnant women, men, children and youths were falling down. People were marching on those on the ground. There was confusion. People were shouting and crying for help. It was a helpless situation because everyone was looking for a way to enter. Nobody could help those that fell down. Many people died inside and outside.

“I suspect the organisers called for ambulance to rush people to hospitals. One ambulance came and started carrying victims to the Military Hospital. A man came from the Military Hospital. He said some were in coma, some on oxygen, some already dead. The man said it would take the grace of God for all of them to survive.”

The eyewitness said some lucky ones (including herself) waited after the incident, hoping that the organisers might still continue with the distribution.

According to Johnson, five vans containing the gift items were parked inside the premises. But, they were later driven to an undisclosed area after the arrival of policemen.

She continued: “The five vans they brought for the sharing were still inside there. Most of us were still waiting, before about four police patrol teams arrived. Shortly after, the vans carrying the items started driving out. It was at that point, some people who had been waiting, hoping that the gift items would be shared, started to leave.

“I am so surprised because this is not the first time this man (referring to the pastor) is organising such an outreach. Past events had been very successful. None of the previous events had recorded any casualty.

“For about three years, he has not done it. But, the one he did last, people said it was successful. That I didn’t want to come. Unfortunately, as I came today, I saw the situation, which was not what anyone expected.”

Although she called on government to investigate the matter, the witness noted that the pastor of the church has been a good man.

She said: “Government should look into the matter, because the man (pastor) has been doing it successfully. I don’t know the devil that caused this one. So, government should really look into it, have pity and do what it is supposed to do.”

Reacting, The Kings Assembly, the organisers, said they would work with police authorities to find out what caused the stampede.

In a statement signed by the director of administration, Chimeka Elem, the church expressed sadness on the unfortunate incident, which was intended to help the less privileged.

Elem explained that the ‘Shop for Free’ programme started in 2014. He stated that the church had always taken safety of the congregation seriously. He said, for this year’s edition, the church chose Polo Club to be able to control the crowd.

The director of administration added that the organisers did not expect what happened because the crowd gathered overnight long before the security teams arrived the place.

The statement partly read: “The King’s Assembly is deeply saddened by the stampede incident that happened in the early hours before the commencement of our benevolence and outreach programme called ‘Shop-for-Free’ at Polo Club, in Port Harcourt, on Saturday, May 28, 2022.

“The purpose for this non-denominational event is to share with the less privileged the gifts provided by our members, friends and partners. Unfortunately, lives were lost and several people sustained varying degrees of injuries.

**100% Natural Herbs to Finally End Premature Ejaculation, Weak Erection and Small Manhood.**

**[>>>Click Here for Details<<< .](#)**

“Our medical team has been working with medical volunteers, and the Military Hospital in Port Harcourt to provide emergency medical services to those affected in this incident. While the incident has been reported to the Nigeria Police Force, the church has commissioned a team of safety specialists to establish the immediate causes of the stampede to enable us provide the authorities all required information in compliance with public safety laws.

benevolence outreach, and our choice of the large venue, Polo Club, was to accommodate the projected attendance.

“This year’s turnout, buildup and the attendant circumstances were absolutely unanticipated. The crowd converged overnight, long before the security teams for the event took formation. We are reviewing our public safety protocol and advance crowd management procedures to persistently ensure that our events are safe.”

Elem said that further details would be made available to the public. He added that, in the meantime, the church was rapidly tracing and engaging the affected families.

The organizers encouraged their members and friends to hold up the affected families in prayers.

Meanwhile, Governor Nyesom Wike has expressed grief over the loss of lives in the unfortunate stampede incident that occurred.

Wike, who was disheartened by the tragedy, mourned the victims and expressed profound condolences to the bereaved families.

Wike, in a statement by his media aide, Kelvin Ebiri, expressed: “On of behalf of the Government and people of Rivers State, I pray for God to grant the bereaved families the fortitude to bear the loss of their loved ones.

“I also pray for the souls of all the faithful departed rest in perfect peace. And to the injured, I wish them a speedy recovery.”

The governor said the Rivers State government will constitute a probe panel to investigate the incident and details on what transpired.

Also, the state chapter of All Progressives Congress (APC) said it received with extreme sadness the news of the stampede that resulted in the unfortunate loss of lives, where they had gathered to receive some form of empowerment through free shopping for sundry items offered by the evangelical church.

State Publicity Secretary of the party, Chris Finebone, in a statement, said: “It is heartbreaking that a supposed well intended programme of the church to save lives resulted to loss of same lives.

“While we appreciate churches and other voluntary organizations that strive to fill in the gaps that exist in the living conditions of the poor of society, we make bold to insist that such organisations should embed safety considerations into whatever they do. We know how our entire society treats issues of safety with indefensible levity and this has remained the major cause of avoidable disasters across our land.

receive and grant eternal rest to the souls of the departed.”

of Police, Mr. Eboka Friday, has ordered a discrete investigation to unravel the immediate cause of stampede that claimed the lives of 31 persons in Port Harcourt, on Saturday.

In a statement by the State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Grace Iringe-Koko, the command informed that the stampede that occurred at Polo Club, Tombia Street, Port Harcourt, was later brought under control and normalcy restored to the area.

According to Iringe-Koko, preliminary investigations conducted by the Command revealed that the unfortunate incident occurred when the management of Kings Church Assembly organised a crusade, which attracted mammoth crowd.

The investigation further revealed that “there were plans by the church management to give away food and gift items to the less privilege. Unfortunately, the crowd became tumultuous and uncontrollable, and all efforts made by the organisers to bring sanity proved abortive. Hence, the stampede.”

The police image maker also revealed that “on receipt of the information, the commissioner of police immediately drafted adequate police patrol teams to the scene and they were able to restore normalcy.”

She stated that persons that were injured were swiftly evacuated to the hospital for immediate medical treatment. She added that “Unfortunately, a total of 31 persons lost their lives in the stampede.”

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Friday, while condemning the incident, has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police in-charge of the State Criminal Investigations Department, to carry out discreet investigations into the incident.

He further called on religious and charity organizations to ensure they work with the Police for security and crowd control management in organizing their programmes in the future.

The CP commiserated with the bereaved families and prayed God to comfort and grant them the fortitude to bear the loss.

Some relatives of the victims reportedly attacked officials of the event, who were members of the church.

Security forces later cordoned off the area and which restricted vehicular movement.