

## Imo building collapse: Death toll rises to 15

May 2, 2020 Ndubuisi Ugah



The death toll in the building collapse along the Yar'Adua Drive in Owerri, the Imo State capital, has risen to 15 as at yesterday, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports. Governor Hope Uzodinma in the meantime has released 36 prisoners as part of efforts to decongest the prison following the threat of COVID-19 pandemic. However, the latest casualty figure was given by the Head of the Imo/Abia State Operations Office of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mr. Evans Ugoh, when he spoke in an interview with a NAN correspondent in Owerri as rescue efforts continued at the site of the building collapse.

Yesterday, an eight-storey building under construction, collapsed killing two persons, while eight others were rescued and rushed to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Owerri. Rescue operators searching for victims pulled out five dead bodies from the debris of the building on same day, while the eight people taken to hospital were later confirmed dead, bringing the total casualty figure to 15. Ugoh said: "As you can see, we are still working, disaster managers are on ground conducting search and rescue.

"We have exhumed five dead bodies today. I believe that more people are still trapped but we will not give up." Meanwhile, Uzodinma also directed the Acting Chief Judge of the State, Mrs. Ijeoma Aguguo, to immediately commence accelerated trial and release of inmates who are on awaiting trial on minor charges or allegations. A statement in Owerri yesterday by the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Declan Emelumba, said the government also directed that the prison trials must observe all COVID-19 safety measures, including wearing of face masks and social distancing.

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