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BUILDING COLLAPSE: Our Son Went To Deliver Food At Building –Grieving Family

 November 6, 2021  Isioma Madike  Comments Off

How I escaped miraculously, by youth 'corper'

Building collapse in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State, has become one too many. The recent one, which happened on Gerrard Road in the Ikoyi area of the "Centre of Excellence", has again brought the issue to the front burner. Isioma Madike, who was at the scene of the collapsed building on Wednesday, captured the mood of some relatives of the victims

There were all manner of people at the site of the collapsed building on Gerrard Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, on Wednesday, November 3. Among the crowd are those involved in the rescue operation, relatives of victims, sympathisers, government officials as well as security operatives. There were also touts from the neighbourhood, who were there to take advantage of the situation to pickpocket from the surging multitude. At one far end sat a young lady, who should be in her mid-twenties. She was forlorn; looking dejected and lost in thought.

She intermittently muttered unintelligent words directed to no one in particular. About four other people sat around her, though not in any sort of open conversation. As our reporter approached them, the mood in the circle changed to some sort of aggression. Sensing danger, the reporter had to play smart by quickly sympathizing with them without even knowing if any of them was a victim. But the strategy worked as it calmed nerves and instantly snowballed into acquaintance.

Gradually but steadily, we became entangled in discussions around the ill-fated building, which was why everyone around had gathered. "My brother, it was God, who saved my life," she said, adding, "I experienced what many would refer to as an uncommon miracle. You can't believe I'd have been in that rubble if not for God. I only escaped by His grace." Prodding further, the young lady, who refused to give her name, told this reporter that she is a Youth Corps member sent to serve in the company.

She said: "My job was to record inward and outward items at the constructing site. On that fateful Monday, I was sent out to get food for my senior colleagues and a few minutes later, the building came down. "It was just like a film and if I had stayed one more minute in the building, I would have become a victim too. None of us expected what happened because we didn't notice any sign. Aside from that, our Oga was around with some clients and friends; it's unfortunate the whole thing happened the way it did. But God knows why." However, not many were as lucky as the young youth corps members.



survivors at the site.

The glowing intensity of the rescue operation after the building came down on Monday afternoon had been replaced with the champing rumble of an excavator digging and lifting concrete slabs without too much care. Voices of frustrated families and friends, who had gathered fill the air as they shout at officials, who visit the site and disapprove of the rescue crew's methods. Distraught relatives and friends of a particular victim had besieged the scene since Monday, seeking information on the fate of their loved one; they looked anxious towards the rubble. Anyone seen coming from the rubble site elicited intense nervousness.

Their eyes were empty with great expectation. They had refused to grant any interview and were livid at any attempt to take any photograph. But shortly into Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's address to journalists on the update of the search team, a loud voice erupted from the women that had gathered in anticipation. The cries drew the attention of this reporter. On enquiry, one of the women thundered: "God why? Omokekere ti lo, she said in Yoruba language, which when interpreted, means, we lost this young chap. Daddy has just identified him, and he is being moved to the morgue now." A source, who does not want to be identified, told our reporter that the young man was not a worker at the site but had gone there to supply some of his friend's food.

"He was full of life on that Monday morning not knowing death was lurking around. His parents and other relatives have been here, hoping he would be rescued alive. He was in his early 20s and very handsome. It's unfortunate we lost him in this manner." Also, a 26-year-old lady, Onyinye Enekwe, was reported as among those who lost their lives in the 21-storey collapsed building. She was said to have worked as second personal assistant to Femi Osibona, owner of Fourscore Homes. Enekwe, whose wedding is said to be slated for next month, resumed duty just a few days before the unfortunate incident occurred, according to reports quoting her cousin, Chinedu. Chinedu was also quoted to have said that Enekwe had taken a picture of herself at the site, which she sent to her older sister just as she arrived at work on Monday morning.

"It was as if she knew that would be her last day on earth," Chinedu added. Another source quoted by the Press, had said: "Oyin is one of the people that were trapped in the collapsed building. Her corpse was found on Wednesday morning. She was employed to work as a personal assistant for the developer, Femi Osibona, and she resumed work on Friday, October 29. She has not collected any salary from this employment.

"She lived at Ago Palace way, Okoya; they offered her accommodation in Ikoyi because of the distance and a monthly salary of N150. Her wedding was to come up this December; her family had even given the husband's family their list. May her soul Rest in Peace."

A pastor of one the popular new generation churches and 22 of his workers were reportedly among those stuck in the rubble of the 21-storey building that collapsed. Meanwhile, the death toll from the unfortunate incident has, however, increased to 38 after 16 additional dead bodies were recovered by the emergency rescue team under the rubble of the ill-fated structure as at Thursday. Incidentally, no additional person has been rescued alive, after the nine survivors were rescued earlier. Before the additional two fatalities, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), which confirmed 36 earlier, had put the number of dead men at 33, and three women. NEMA Acting Coordinator, Lagos Territorial Office, Ibrahim Farinloye, had also said in a terse statement: "So far, 36 people – 33 males and three females – have been confirmed dead, while there were nine survivors."

The Lagos State government said it had commenced an immediate investigation into the circumstances that resulted in the building collapsing. According to the government, the outcome of the investigation would be made public for everyone to know what transpired before and after the building came down. Meanwhile, the names of survivors that are presently undergoing treatment at the Marina Hospital, Lagos, have been made public by Governor Sanwo-Olu. Addressing a press conference, the governor, during his second visit to the site on Wednesday, revealed the names and ages of the survivors

The survivors, as announced by the governor are: Odutan Timileyin, a 26-year-old man, Ahmed Kenleku, 19-year-old man from Cotonou, Sunday Monday, a 21-year-old man suffered a leg fracture, Adeniran Mayowa, a 37-year-old man who suffered a hip injury, Shola Bade Nurudeen, 33-years old man, has a pelvic injury, and Waliu Lateef, 32-year-old. The governor further stated that three had been discharged, but did not specify their gender or give any detail about them.

The building was said to have been designed as a three-tower estate (360° Degree Towers), and the collapsed section is one of the three towers. The main contractor for the project, Fourscore Homes, is owned by Femi Osibona, a UK-trained estate developer. According to Highbrow Living Magazine, the property, consisting of four-bedroom marionettes, flats, duplex and penthouses, was 65 per cent sold out. However, the 20-floor strictly residential facility is said to be the brain work of Fourscore Homes, evolving from a desire to build an original masterpiece.

The concept, according to the magazine, is to have service flats in the three towers for residents to experience a stress-free lifestyle, complete with hotel flair with a 360-degree view of Lagos State. Other planned features of the “luxury in the sky”, the report said, include an open recreation area with outdoor television, gym, and swimming pool. While the structure was said to be 80 per cent completed and was billed to be concluded in 2022, the price range given was between \$1.2 million and \$5 million. In an interview with THISDAY, Osibona was quoted as saying that the project was supposed to be the first of its kind in Nigeria.

He had said: “This development will give peace of mind and comfort to the residents, because everything works. We have exhibited our expertise in property development in the United Kingdom, South Africa, the United States of America and Nigeria. Fourscore Homes possesses uncommon capabilities in redefining property development in any market we choose to play in. “I was one of the people whose real estate developments led to the growth of East London. I bought a house on New Cross Road and renovated it. I also bought a piece of land behind it and built two flats there, and that is what I will call my first real estate project. That was how I started building houses for sale.” However, building collapses has somewhat become a common place in the city of Lagos, as hardly a year passes by without cases.

Some have resulted in the loss of many lives. For instance, it was reported that 115 buildings, mostly residential, collapsed in Lagos between 2005 and 2016. And about 4,000 families have been left homeless and traumatised. The highest number of cases in Lagos was reported in 2011, 2012 and 2019, when 19, 14, and 17 buildings, respectively, collapsed. It emerged that lapses from both private developers and the government contributed to the problem. The solutions however lie, according to experts, in awareness, skills, following regulations and making sure there are consequences for failures. Out of 152 buildings that collapsed in Lagos between 2005 and 2020, 76.6 per cent were residential, 13 per cent commercial and 9.4 per cent were institutional, according to available data. Most of the buildings that collapsed are typically multi-storey buildings. However, some engineers are lamenting the failure to stick to building rules by contractors.

The engineers, according to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), had called the building collapse an unfortunate occurrence, which they said was as a result of greed on the part of the developers. “The government regulatory body, especially the Lagos Building Control Agency came out to say the building was approved for 15 floors but the builder kept on moving up to 21 floors. The structural engineer resigned in February last year based on the fact that the developer was not listening to his instructions. “He went to get other inexperienced engineers and kept on moving on with the project. People lost their lives, a lot sustained injury at the same time, and a very huge economic loss as a result of greed. As a professional body our own limitations are there, we can only regulate the rules and operations. “The government has the political power to apprehend some of these culprits involved in these types of crimes. It’s unfortunate that Nigeria is recording this huge loss despite the economic depression that we are in.

I hope the government will wake up,” Sharafadeen Olumoh, a National Officer of the Nigerian Institute of Civil Engineers, quoted to have said. Also speaking about the collapse, the immediate past National Chairman of the Nigeria Institution of

what the Lagos State building regulatory agencies were doing when the builder continued to raise the building that was supposedly approved for 15 storeys. He thereafter called on the Lagos State government to get some competent engineers together to look at the project and find out where errors had been committed, adding that this should be done in conjunction with COREN and the Nigerian Society of Engineers.

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