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## Nigeria: Building Collapse - Death Toll Hits Nine As Rescue Ends

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**This Day (Lagos)**  
**1 August 2008**  
 Posted to the web 1 August 2008

Onwuka Nzeshi, Chinwe Ochu And  
 Damilola Oyedele  
 Abuja

**THIS DAY**

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Forty-eight hours after the collapse of the twin four-storey buildings in the Utako District of Abuja, nine persons have so far been confirmed dead just as the search and rescue operations have gradually turned into recovery of dead bodies.

Apart from the five dead bodies recovered from the rubbles of the gigantic structure, four of the 32 wounded persons who were rushed to the hospital shortly after the disaster, have died.

This development is coming just as former governor of Delta State, Chief James Ibori, debunked reports that the collapsed buildings belonged to him

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He has also threatened to seek legal redress if the reports were not retracted by the media houses concerned.

An official of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), said the search had been called off.

The agency's official who craved anonymity, said over the next few days, the agency might have to concentrate on recovery of corpses as there was little probability of rescuing anyone alive again.

THISDAY observed that several rescue vehicles including ambulances belonging to several organisations, which were hitherto stationed around the disaster site have been withdrawn by their owners.

Meanwhile, Habibu Kabiru, a 23-year-old labourer and a second victim, Awalu Ibrahim, 27, are currently lying critically ill at the Wuse General Hospital, Abuja.

Hospital authorities said 26 other persons who sustained minor injuries had been treated and discharged.

Kabiru was among the 32 victims who were rushed to the hospital in the wake of the disaster.

Still shocked at the incident, Kabiru said the collapse of the building happened so suddenly that he did not know what happened to him until hours later when he was revived at the hospital.

According to him, there were about 25 persons on the topmost floor of the ill-fated building when it crashed.

Kabiru, who spoke through an interpreter, said: "I can't remember what really happened because we were all working and moving up and down the building. I just heard shouts and I remember that I fell down and I felt some pains before some people came around. I later found myself at the hospital."

But Ibrahim had a different story. He was neither a worker at the construction site nor was he in the building when it collapsed.

He had gone to the disaster site Wednesday in search of one of his relatives believed to have been trapped under the collapsed building.

Perhaps in the desperation and anxiety to join in the rescue efforts, he fell on the way of one of the heavy duty bulldozers also on rescue operations.

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