

Two Persons Die in Abuja Building Collapse

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Two persons have been confirmed dead while two others are trapped in a collapsed building in Kubwa, Abuja.

The Senior Special Assistant on Monitoring and Enforcement to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mohammed Bello, Ikharo Attah has confirmed that the shopping mall which was being redesigned into a residential apartment went down early Thursday morning and claimed the lives of the security man guarding the site and another site worker.

A combined team of the responders from Abuja Metropolitan Management Council, Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Nigerian

Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and others have also rescued seven victims from the rubble.

The building, according to eyewitnesses, was being converted from a shopping mall to a residential apartment, with the developer deciding to add at least two more floors to an already existing structure in apparent contravention of building code.

"It happened around 11.30p.m. yesterday (Thursday). We were seven people sleeping here. One person slept at the boys' quarter, another slept at the security post, and then the remaining five slept in the main building. Five of us have been rescued. It remains a security man, and the man that brought me here," one of

the survivors told journalists.

Attah said the owner of the property was fore-warned by concerned residents.

"The building was initially a shopping mall, but the report we got from residents was that the owner was warned, and at a certain point, it was now being converted to a residential apartment.

"The down floor was a shopping mall, but they were putting up some blocks of flats on the first and second suspended floors. You cannot alter a shopping mall and convert it to a residential building thereby giving it more load than what it was meant to carry," he noted.

He added that the FCT minister had ordered that

integrity tests be carried out on most of the high rise buildings around the area.

According to him, the combined team of security agencies at the scene was currently trailing the owner of the property, who residents suggested may have absconded.

"We have a policy in the FCTA that when a building collapses, the land is forfeited and revoked and the place is converted into a park or garden for residents around the neighbourhood," he added.

Umar Shago, Coordinator, Abuja Metropolitan Management Council, blamed the incident on quackery and shady construction, adding that the FCTA has a policy of subjecting old buildings to integrity tests.