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Puzzle over death of surveyor in collapsed building

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By Bose Adelaja

Days after the death of a surveyor, W.O. Eyefia, on Friday May 8, 2015, tongues are still wagging over the strange circumstances surrounding his demise. Indeed, many people, including his neighbours at Asala Street, Isolo, Lagos, are still baffled by the development, especially as the deceased who was supposed to be a licensed and experienced surveyor died when a building entrusted in his care collapsed on him.

Until his death, Mr Eyefia, an Urhobo from Delta State, occupied four rooms at the ground floor of the ill-fated storey building. When he woke up about 9am that fateful Friday hale and hearty, he was naturally oblivious that anything could go wrong, especially one that could put his life at risk or even send him to his untimely grave.

“Daddy”, as he was fondly called, who lived in the building with his immediate family, also doubled as the caretaker. But many people in the area were said to have severally warned about the poor condition of the building which they insisted needed urgent repairs. Their entreaties in this regard were said to have fallen on deaf ears. Indeed many residents in the area were of the view that being a surveyor by profession and the caretaker of the house, Eyefia should have recognised the danger signs and taken steps to put the building in order and ensuring the safety of those living there.

The ground floor of the yellow painted building had the typical face-me-I-face you rooms, while the top floor was divided into room-and- parlours and mini-flats. The tenants staying on the ground floor had only one functional bathroom to serve them. This bathroom was said to have been in



(http://www.vanguardngr.com/?attachment_id=525980)

a sorry state and required serious repairs. Sources said the landlord, who^{*The building where the surveyor-cum-caretaker met his untimely end} was not staying in the house, had budgeted N100,000 and authorised the deceased to spend same for necessary repairs on the faulty bathroom.

Tenants in the building were said to have paid their rents annually through the surveyor. Neighbours said that from the rent collected in October 2014, the landlord released N100,000 to the caretaker to effect repairs on the said bathroom. Unfortunately, this was not done even though the landlord was allegedly made to believe that the repairs were made. His co-tenants also claimed that they did not know that he had been given the money for the repairs until the day the sad incident occurred.

Incidentally, on that fateful day, the caretaker woke up and, as usual, exchanged greetings with his neighbours and called their attention to the dilapidated bathroom, telling them to be careful while using it. But as if programmed for a date with tragedy, he headed for the bathroom to have his bath. It was while he was taking his bath that the bathroom collapsed, trapping him in the process. He died before help could come.

On hearing the loud sound that accompanied the collapse, neighbours rushed out to see what was happening. That was when they saw that the bathroom section had collapsed and they immediately embarked on a rescue operation. But this was too late as the body of the caretaker was already buried in rubble. On hearing of the sad development the landlord was said to have rushed to the scene.

On getting there, he was surprised to learn that the bathroom he approved money for its repairs as far back as 2014 was still in the same decrepit state; it was based on his reaction to this that tenants and neighbours got to know of the true situation of things and thereby voiced out their displeasure.

Following the development, the state government has since decided to carry out tests on some buildings within the neighbourhood. In the event, buildings deemed as being faulty have been marked, especially on Holy Saviour and Hassan streets, for likely demolition. Meantime, 4, Asala Street has been sealed up and occupants forced to relocate.

During *Vanguard Metro's* visits to the area, there were little or no activities on Asala Street, while none of the landlords was around for a chat. On neighbouring streets, some residents of the affected buildings said their landlords had been trying to reach out to the relevant authorities in order to resolve the matter.

A resident at Asala, Mr Gabriel Awoyinfa, claimed his landlord was instructed by the state government to carry out palliative measures on his building before May ending failure of which the building may be demolished.

However, Madam Aboyade Rukayat and Olabisi Ibrahim said many families will be rendered homeless should most of the marked buildings be demolished at the end of the day.

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