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Building collapse: 34 confirmed dead as evacuation ends

ON MARCH 10, 2016 12:07 AM / IN [NEWS](#) / [COMMENTS](#)

By Evelyn Usman , Bose Adelaja, Ebum Sesou and Monsuru Olowoopejo
The death toll from Tuesday's five-storey building collapse in Lekki area of Lagos , rose to 34 yesterday, with the recovery of sixteen additional bodies, all males.

Rescue work was concluded at about 7.20 pm, with all rescue operators comprising the National Emergency Management Agency , Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, the Nigeria Red Cross Society, the Lagos State Fire Service and the Nigeria Police Force , vacating the scene. So far, 13 persons were rescued alive.

This is just as the Lagos State Police Command has arrested contractor of

the collapsed building, Mr Odofin Taiwo, over the incident.

Also, identity of the nursing mother whose body and that of her baby were brought out from the rubble Tuesday, has been identified as Arlette Josia.



Besides, preliminary investigation has revealed that the building was

Scenes from the scene of the collapsed building at Kusenla road, Ikate, Elegushi, Lekki, Lagos, yesterday.

served a contravention notice for exceeding the approved floors. Consequently, the building was said to have been sealed by the Lagos State Building Control Agency.

But owners of the building, Messrs Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited, LWE, promoters of Lekki Gardens, allegedly unsealed the property and continued construction work, until tragedy struck.

To this effect, all directors of Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited , have been given a 24-hour ultimatum to submit themselves to the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owooseni, for interrogation.

An embittered Governor Akinwunmi Ambode of Lagos who gave the ultimatum yesterday, threatened that failure of the directors to show up at the Police Command headquarters within the stipulated time, would lead to their arrest.

Spokes person for the Lagos State Police Command, Dolapo Badmus, confirmed the arrest of one of the contractors. She simply told Vanguard "Yes, I can confirm arrest of Odofin Taiwo."

Vanguard gathered that rescue operators stopped evacuation at about 9.30pm Tuesday, during which 18 bodies, three of which were of Benin Republic nationals . They resumed yesterday at about 9am.

The first corpse recovered yesterday was that of one of the labourers identified simply as Akeem. He was brought out at about 9.53am.

Thirty minutes later, another unidentified person was brought out dead. Two others were brought out at about 10.25am. Others were recovered by 11am,12.25pm, 1,30pm, 1.55pm and 14.10pm respectively.

Four additional bodies were recovered at about 6:28 pm from the debris.

The recovery of each body was greeted with wailing from sympathisers who throng the scene.

Already, offensive smell had started emitting from the rubbles.

A woman who claimed to be a relative to the nursing mother whose body was recovered Tuesday alongside her baby was reportedly sighted at the scene wailing at about 8.45am yesterday.

She gave the name of the deceased nursing mother as Arlette Josia.

Late Josia's relative who claimed to be from Benin Republic disclosed that the deceased visited Nigeria to get some money to pay the medical bill of her ailing child, back in Benin Republic.

According to the relation who gave her name simply as Lyndagedro; "News of the tragic incident filtered into our area in Lokosa, late last night (Tuesday night) What caught my attention was the woman and her baby .

"Immediately, I remembered that Arlette told me she was coming to meet her husband, a mason who was working in a site in Lagos. I did not know the exact location.

"But I was curious and afraid at the same time, following several unanswered calls to her mobile telephone.

"My husband advised that I should visit Lagos. I left Benin republic as early as 5am. I started asking for the direction of this place right from the border. I boarded a bus to Mile 2 and from there to CMS , from where I boarded another one to this place.

"I was directed to Lagos Island mortuary by some people, where I requested to see the corpses, only to discover that one of them was that of Mrs Josia," she said in tears.

It was observed that the building sank into the ground.

Vanguard gathered that the building sank to the second floor level.

Confirming the death toll were the General Manager of the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, LASEMA Mr. Michael Akindele and National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA South-West, Mr. Yakubu Sulaimon.

On some Muslim relatives who were agitating for the release of their corpses for proper burial according to Islamic rites, the General Manager said; "For the Muslims, we are working on proper documentation on how to release the corpses to their relatives. Some of the procedures for the release of bodies to relatives are presentation of Nigerian Police report, Lagos state government official report and National Identity card."

... 13th victim dies few minutes on arrival at hospital

Vanguard gathered that the 13th person was rescued from the rubble unconscious. He was hurriedly driven to the General Hospital (Odan) Marina, Lagos Island Local Government, where he reportedly died on arrival.

When Vanguard visited the hospital, a female official who did not want her name in prints confirmed the death.

Sources said that two other survivors had been wheeled to the X-ray ward for further treatment.

Another male official who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that 13 persons were brought to the hospital for treatment but "we have 12 left in here at the Lagos State Emergency Management Service, LASEMS wards.

“One of the rescued workers of the collapsed building was wheeled to the X-ray centre few minutes ago.”

He however lamented that the facility used in wheeling the patients was not effective because the handlers spent more time struggling to use the facility.

Efforts to speak to the Chief Medical Director, CMD, proved abortive.

..we lost 25 members – Hausa community

Secretary of the Hausa Community in Eti-Osa local Government, Auwalu Hassan, disclosed that 25 artisans from the Northern part of the country died in the collapsed building.

In an interview with Vanguard, the Kano state born chairman said out of the 25 persons, six had been recovered from the rubble.

He identified some of the victims as: Johson, Yohana, Maria, including four children; Yakub, John and Ilias Others were Isiak, saidu, Gwoni, Buhari, Abba, Mustapha among others.

...Survivor's account

An elated survivor, Mr. Abu Abbah, told Vanguard how anger saved him from being among those trapped.

According to him; “ When I heard that the site engineer was not coming to pay our N10, 000 weekly wages and N500 daily feeding allowance, I left the site angrily because the engineer had defaulted for two weeks. Though, he promised to pay on Tuesday after contacting him on phone, but I did not

believe him since he had defaulted. I left the site Monday night .

“ I put a call to my elder brother, Alli Abbah, to know if he (engineer) had fulfilled his promise, yesterday , but his response shook me to the bone marrow. Fortunately, for Alli, he was among those rescued alive but he sustained injuries on his right thigh. His friend Sulaiman died .”

... workers fault Lekki Gardens stop-work claims

Mr. Vincent Paul, one of the artisans engaged by the Lekki Gardens in an interview with Vanguard faulted claims by the estate owners that construction work was temporarily halted at the site.

Paul, whose friend, Sunday John, 29, was still missing, argued that work never stopped at the site, adding “I have worked with the Lekki Garden for four years. I know how they complete their work.”

On his missing friend, the Benue State indigene said; “I saw him last a day before yesterday. He told me he had work to do here. But I told him I had another work to do outside, so , I passed the night in Elegushi. I have been calling his phone but it wasn't ringing. I have checked all the corpses but didn't see my friend's. He is married with a child. The family is based in Benue State.”

..SON collects material samples for test

Director, Inspector and Compliance, directorate of the Standard Organisation of Nigeria, SON, Mr. Bebe Obayi, who led a team from the organisation to the scene, ordered that some of the building materials be collected for inspection. He said; “They will be subjected to material testing.

This is to ascertain if the engineers adhered to the proper building standard.”

....Lagos seals 20 distressed buildings

Worried by the state of the buildings in Horizon 1, Lekki Gardens, the Lagos State Safety Commission and the State Building Control Agency, LASBCA has sealed over 20 buildings in the community.

Vanguard investigation revealed that the structures were sealed for defaulting in the 2010 construction law of the state.

General Manager of LASBCA, Engineer Shola Adeigbe said that the buildings would be subjected to test to ascertain if the structures were not defective.

24-hour ultimatum

Meanwhile in his condolence to the relatives of masons who lost their lives in the collapsed building, governor Ambode, in a statement signed by the by the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Steve Ayorinde, said; “Based on preliminary reports and investigation, it was discovered that the collapsed building was served contravention notice for exceeding the approved floors and thereafter sealed by the Lagos State Building Control Agency, LSBCA.

It was discovered that in a brazen act of defiance and impunity, owners of the building, Messrs Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited, the promoters of Lekki Gardens, criminally unsealed the property and continued building beyond the approved floors until the unfortunate incident of Tuesday which led to loss of lives.

“Arising from the Lagos State Executive Council meeting decision on Wednesday, the State Government will no longer tolerate the action of unscrupulous owners and builders who challenge its supervisory control thereby endangering the lives of Lagosians.

The State Government has consequently directed the suspension of work at the site and has ordered the Lagos State Police Command to cordon it off as it is now a crime scene.

The government also directs further integrity tests to be carried out on every other construction project which has or is currently being handled by Messrs Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited in the interest of public safety”.

Warning that it would no longer be business as usual, Ambode threatened that any developer who fail to comply with building and construction regulations or attempted to subvert the law would henceforth face criminal prosecution.

He however, commended what he described as timely response and remarkable intervention by rescue operators.

Property owners react

But in its reaction, Management of Lekki Gardens exonerated its self from blame that it kept workers late at the site. Rather, it clarified that closes work at the site by 6pm, after which workers were mandated to leave for their respective homes.

A statement signed by the management read: “In line with our usual safety standards, all sites are closed off by 6pm daily and it is mandatory that

every worker leaves at that time. It is not company policy for site workers to take shelter in uncompleted buildings.

“Lekki Gardens is a reputable residential property development company and has successfully completed and delivered over 6,000 units of houses across Lagos, Ogun, Rivers State and the Federal Capital territory, Abuja in the past 4 years and most of them already occupied. The building which was one of its residential estate projects in Lekki, was under construction and was meant to house a number of apartment units.

“The company is cooperating with the National Emergency Management Agency, Lagos State Government, Fire Service and Lagos State Police to speed up rescue efforts. Investigation is already underway to ascertain the identities of those affected .

The Management and staff of Lekki Gardens sincerely sympathize with the families of those who lost their lives. The company will do all in its power to ensure that those injured are fully supported.

South West spokesperson for NEMA, Ibrahim Farinloye stated that “operations at the scene were concluded at 7.20pm with 34 dead and 13 rescued alive, after reaching ground zero. Investigation on the cause of the collapse has started by various federal and state agencies”.

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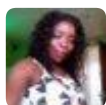


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May their souls rest in peace. And may their children be given automatic employment.

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Lord have mercy on us and their souls rest In the blossom of the Lord

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May the soul of the dead rest in peace. Those wounded quick recovery.

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Everybody wants to own the highest building in lagos and that's why all this are happening..someone who doesn't know anything about building and construction engineering will be given a contract to build ten story building and at the end the building will start having stretch marks or collapse..may God grant them eternal rest amend

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What a waste,pls Abode do something about this under developer who don't do things in d right way and did lead to lost of innocent lives

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oh my God,

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David • an hour ago

Besides, preliminary investigation has revealed that the building was served a contravention notice for exceeding the approved floors. Consequently, the building was said to have been sealed by the Lagos State Building Control Agency. But owners of the building, Messrs Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited, LWE, promoters of Lekki Gardens, allegedly unsealed the property and continued construction work, until tragedy struck. To this effect, all directors of Lekki Worldwide Estate Limited, have been given a 24-hour ultimatum to submit themselves to the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Fatai Owoseni, for interrogation.

Any time we default on compliance to standard rules, guidelines, procedures or processes: lives and properties suffer for it in unimaginable ways.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



abiamone • 4 hours ago

The engineers should consult TB Joshua on how to evade prosecution.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Ndidi • 5 hours ago

blacklivesDON'Tmatter

We can already smell all kinds of corruption in this building collapse. . From substandard materials to substandard workers to substandard contractors to substandard construction company owners to substandard building and construction regulators. Money has exchanged hands. Bribes have been given. Now Black blood (as usual) has been shed for nothing. Black lives DON'T matter. Not in Nigeria. Not in Africa. In fact, not in this world.

PS - A Race that practices human sacrifice satanism (aka ritual killing)makes a pact with the devil and should not expect ANYTHING to turn out well for them.

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Sharia_Haram • 7 hours ago

it is obvious that there was no government agency monitoring the building construction. Gov Ambode should resign.

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takethetrain • 11 hours ago

fake and lies..must have been a one sided building.

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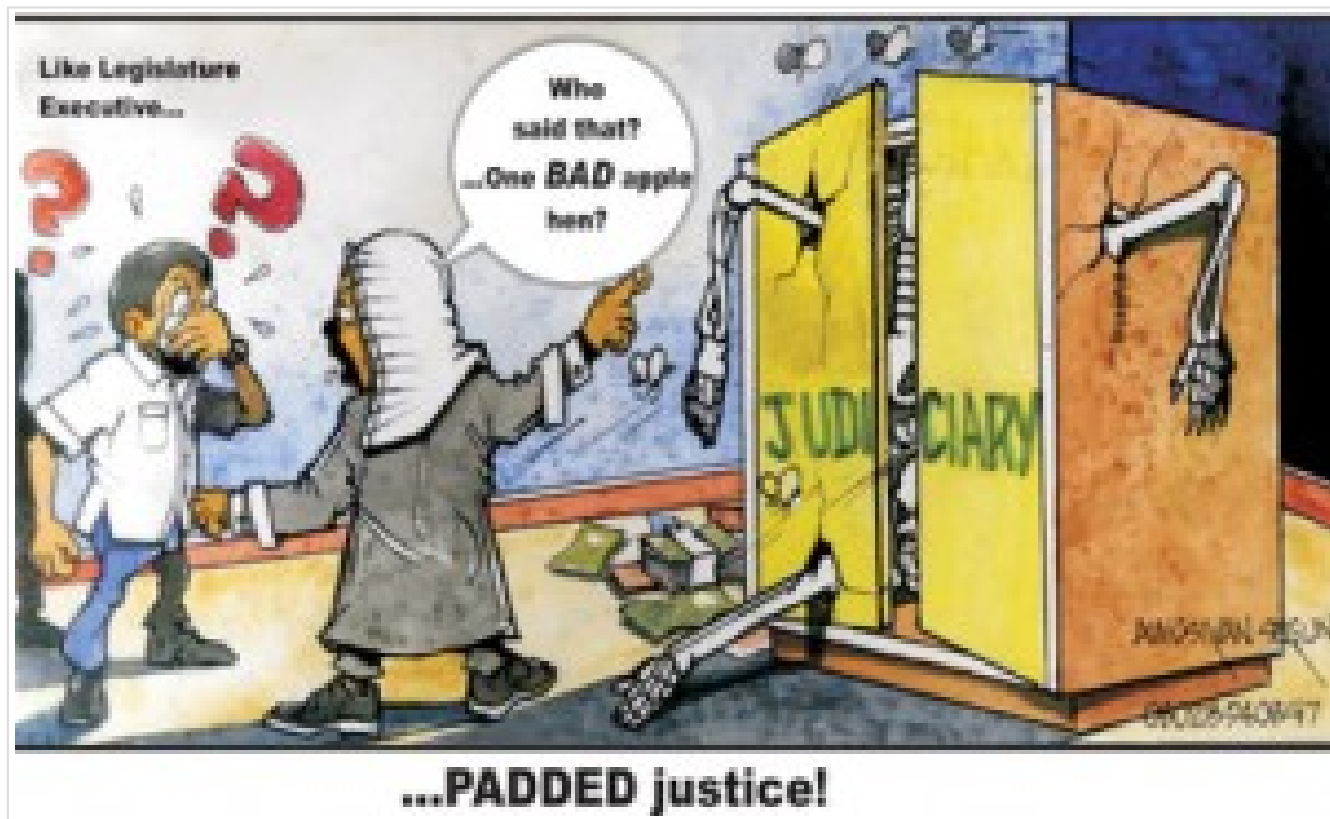


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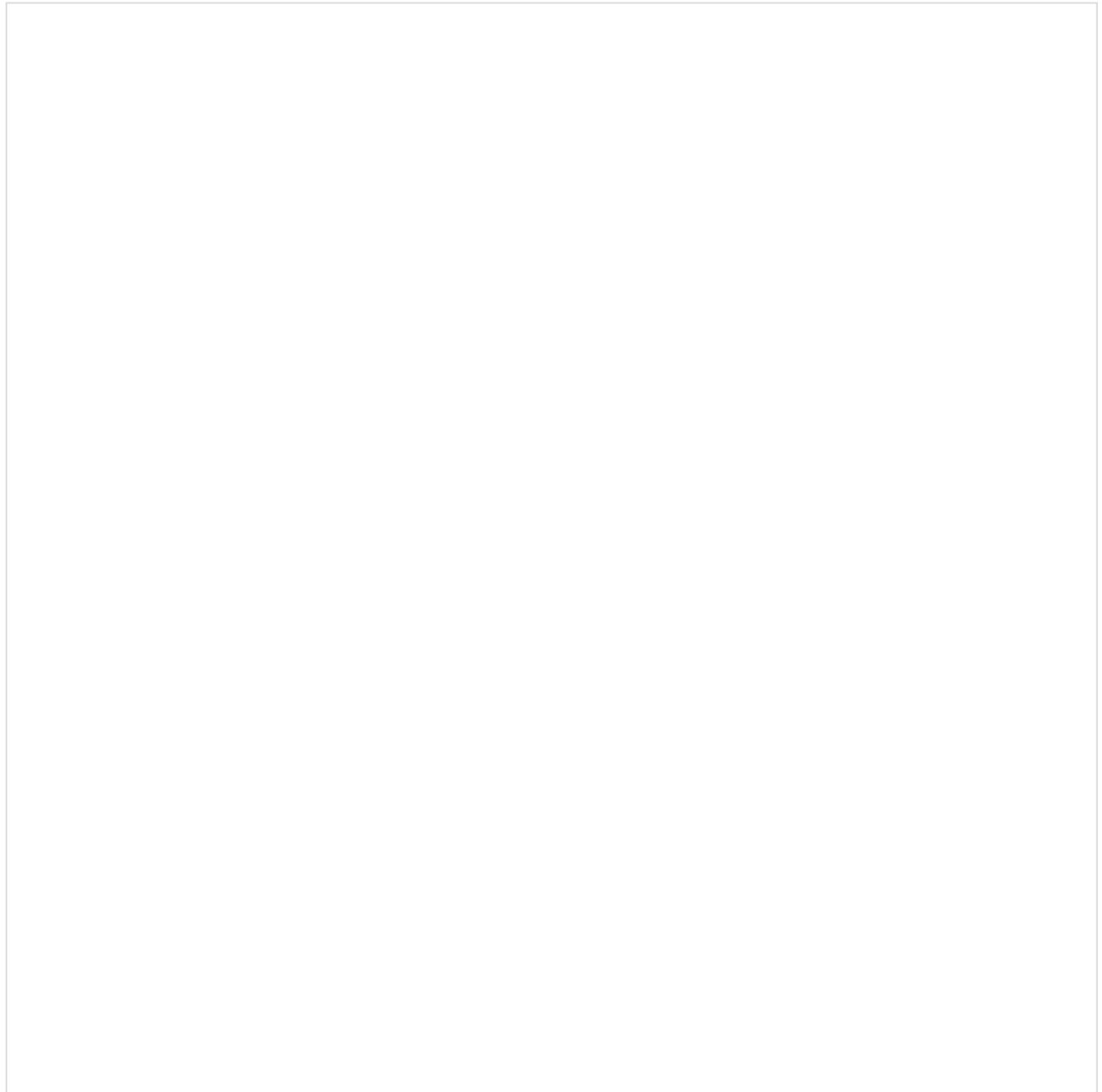


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