

## Lagos building collapse: Ambode pulls down four buildings, 77 others for immediate demolition

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- \*Govt confirms 20 people dead**
- \*Blames impediment for high casualties recorded**
- \*Debunks alleged extortion of victims by hospital staff**

By Olasunkanmi Akoni and Monsuru Olowoopejo

Following the collapse of three-storey building that claimed 20 persons in Lagos, the State Government, yesterday, demolished four buildings and 77 others marked for immediate demolition.



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The state government added that the marked buildings would be pulled down in phases through either manual or explosive material.

General Manager, Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA) Olalekan Shodeinde, lamented that court litigations have impeded the agency's effort to prevent collapse buildings in the state.

The General Manager, who was represented at the demolition scene by the Agency Secretary, Mr. Tayo Fakolujo, supervised the demolition exercise of the buildings on 50 Freeman Street, 47 Smith Street, 28 and 30 Apatira streets.

"For instance, the building on Smith Street had been in court since 2014; we just got injunction about two weeks ago."

Aside the 81, the General Manager disclosed that cases on 20 building were still pending in court, saying, "that is one of the reasons we have not been quick in pulling down distressed building.

"What we have been trying to avoid over the years was court fines. And after getting injunctions, we still have to give the occupants few days to vacate the building."

Shodeinde assured that the agency will not allow another building to cave in on Lagos Island before being pulled down.

"For the buildings that are still distressed and still occupied, the occupants will be evicted to avoid another loss of lives."

Meanwhile, the government has blamed the impediment caused by onlookers and local rescue team as the major factor responsible for the high number of casualties recorded in collapsed building at Ita-Faaji, Lagos Island.

It however, confirmed that a total of 20 people died in the disaster which happened last Wednesday, at number 10 Dogara Street, Lagos.

The three-storey-building housed a private Nursery School, Baden School, residents and shops on the ground floor of the structure.

The state Commissioner for Health, Dr. Jide Idris and General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Authority, LASEMA, Mr Adesina Tihamiyu, disclosed the figure at a media briefing on the sad incident after rescue operation has been completed, held at the Lagos Island General Hospital.

According to Idris, out of the 20 casualties recorded, 16 were pupils of the school, while the remaining four were adults.

He added that 45 survivors were received and were managed by government Health facilities, notably Lagos Island General Hospital, Massey Street Children Hospital, Onikan Health Centre., Gbagada General Hospital, LASUTH , National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi and LUTH.

As at yesterday morning, he said that 14 (10 children and 4 adults) were still receiving treatment at Lagos Island General Hospital for various levels of injuries.

Tiamiyu, in his address said the casualties would not have risen to 20 if the crowd that thronged the scene gave quick unhindered access to the site for adequate rescue operation to take place.

According to him, “We had hectic time controlling the crowd that milled around the scene of the incident thereby, prevented easy access for prompt rescue operation. It’s so sad that during emergency, onlookers and sympathisers always constitute hindrance to rescue team in performing their duty, which is to save life. But it’s quite unfortunate, our people do not have a better orientation of giving access to rescue team during emergency.

“On that particular incident (Ita-Faaji) if we had been given access early enough, LASEMA would have saved many lives from the debris. We hope residents will learn from this lesson.”

Reacting to the rumours making the rounds that some of the survivors were being charged for health care, the commissioner refuted the allegation based on the clear directive of the state Governor, Mr Akinwunmi Ambode on free medical treatment at all government owned facilities.

He however, warned that any government official caught extorting money from any survivor or demanding for gratification will be made to face strict disciplinary actions.

He said, “demanding that survivors who are already traumatized to pay for medical bills is not only unethical but also criminal”.

Idris, therefore, called on family members who have evidence of such extortion to contact the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr Titilayo Goncalves on 08023049478 with authentic proof.

