

## 10 trapped, one dead, three rescued as 4-storey building collapses in Onitsha

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By Chimaobi Nwaiwu

**ONITSHA**—Many residents of Ezenwa Street by Ogalanya Junction Onitsha, Anambra State, wailed uncontrollably yesterday, as no fewer than 10 persons were trapped when a four-storey building under construction collapsed, without machine available for rescue operations several hours after the incident.



Scene of a collapsed building

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Hundreds of people gathered at the scene of the incident as rescue workers and sympathisers struggled to rescue the trapped people, one of who is suspected to be the site engineer.

A source said: “They were working at the site, when suddenly we heard a loud sound as the building collapsed.”

After many efforts, two people were rescued by the youths and officials of Operation Clean and Healthy Anambra State, popularly known as OCHA Brigade, who carried out the operations manually.

Reacting, Chairman of Nigerian Red Cross Society, Professor Peter Katchy, who supervised the rescue of the victim, said he has been taken to the intensive care unit of the General Hospital, Onitsha.

### **Manual rescue operation**

However, Professor Katchy, who was very angry and frustrated that up till 4.30p.m., hours after the building collapsed there was no rescue equipment for excavation to bring out the remaining people trapped in the rubble.

He said he made several calls to respective government agencies for excavators to be provided without any fruitful result.

Anambra State Emergency Management Agency, SEMA, Executive Director, Chief Agupugo, and the Executive Assistant to Governor Willie Obiano on SEMA, Chief Emeka Obinwa, were sighted at the scene of the incident, making frantic efforts and calls to ensure rescue of the victims.

Divisional Police Officer, Central Police Station, CPS Ifeanyi Iburu, said he called the Chairman of Onitsha North Local Government Area, Mr. Patrick Aghamba, to arrange for an excavator, saying the manual effort would not take them anywhere in the rescue operations.

However, when Mr. Aghamba visited the scene at about 3p.m., he immediately left to mobilise excavating machines, but was yet to return with any at press time.

Help finally came for the victims at about 5:30p.m., when Aghamba arrived with a tractor and a pay loader for the rescue mission.

### **Dismembered**

Immediately, the heavy duty machine went into action rescuing two other victims, sending the crowd into jubilation one of the victims waved to the crowd while being taken to the hospital.

But joyous mood of the sympathisers, which increased when the first, second and third victims were rescued, dampened as parts of the dismembered body of a fourth victim were sighted.

The remains were taken to the General Hospital, Onitsha, mortuary by official of Red Cross.

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