

## 4 students drown, many missing as bridge collapses at Bauchi varsity

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### By Charles Agwam

**Four** students were killed, some injured, while some are still missing, yesterday, after a pedestrian bridge collapsed at the Gubi campus of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, ATBU.

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It was gathered that the students were returning to the hostel from a night class on Monday after a downpour, when the bridge linking one of the hostels to the lecture rooms collapsed.

According to reports, there were 20 students on the bridge when it caved in.

Eight of them, who got caught in the frenzy, were said to have sustained injuries, while others are missing.

Following the tragedy, some irate students had taken to the school premises yesterday, in protest. They also blamed the incident on negligence by the school authorities.

In reaction to the incident, the school authorities announced the shutdown of the varsity till August 19.

### **Eyewitnesses accounts**

When *Vanguard* visited the school yesterday, some protesting students who were seen in clusters in what seemed like the entrance of the school, as the school has no visible perimeter fencing, said they were sad about their missing friends and worried about their own safety.

A student, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told *Vanguard* “when the rain started around 11p.m., we all got up to leave for our hotels and started running when the rain increased.

“At the bridge, I was few steps behind some of my friends, who are now either dead or missing when the bridge collapsed.

“We called the SUG (Student Union Government) President to come and assist us, but he told us that it was too late in the night and that he would come and inspect the damage by morning. As I speak, I can’t find some of my friends.”

Moments later, after identifying the reporter through his identity card, students started chanting, “*Vanguard*, go to the bridge and see how they killed us.”

The protesting students took the liberty to reel out their complaints and made the reporter trek with them for over three miles between overgrown bushes to the scene of the tragedy.

One of the student said: “See, the Management does not care about us. We have complained several times about that thing they call bridge. Do you even know that it was constructed by an ex-student?”

Another student said: “Every night we go out to read, we are either attacked by snakes or scorpions. Sometimes, we see very strange animals coming out from the bush.”

Halfway to the collapsed bridge, a swamp forced everyone to fold up trousers and raise skirts, with students chorusing “*Vanguard* welcome to ATBU!”

At the scene of the tragedy, students stood around to mourn their lost friends, roommates and course mates.

One said: “We have cried to the school several times over the state of this bridge for them to intervene, but each time we cried to them, it was as if we were pouring water on a stone.

“The worst part is that the Dean of the School came to tell us that exams would continue. Could he have said that if his own child was a victim?”

**VC briefing**

Reacting to the development at a briefing, the Vice Chancellor of the Institution, Professor Muhammad Abdulazeez, who attributed delay to intervene on the bridge to paucity of funds, said the University Senate had decided to close the school till Tuesday, August 19, to honour the dead students.

His words: “I regret to announce the death of two of our students, who lost their lives in an unfortunate accident at Gubi campus of our university. While the full details of the occurrence are being awaited, the university Senate, at an emergency meeting today(yesterday) decided to close the school in honour of our late students.

“I want to use this opportunity to commiserate with the families of the deceased and pray that Allah grants the souls of the departed eternal rest.”

However, *Vanguard's* learned that at the last count, four bodies had been recovered dead with many still missing.

The Police in Bauchi confirmed the development, but referred journalists to the university's Public Relations Unit for details.

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