

# 15 dead, 12 injured in Owerri collapsed building

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OVER 15 unidentified persons have been confirmed dead, while no fewer than 12 others with varying degrees of injuries, were rescued from the rubbles of the collapsed, uncomplicated eight-storey building in Owerri.

Rescue operation was still going on, at the Musa Yar'adua Drive, site of the ugly incident at the time of going to press yesterday, as some of the survivors claimed that "many people are still trapped under the rubbles".

Saturday Vanguard gathered that the eight-storey building, which is believed to be a hotel under construction, suddenly crashed Thursday, leaving many workers and others, trapped.

About six ambulance vehicles were stationed at the accident site, while two excavators deployed by the state government, were still removing the rubbles, with a view to getting at the people believed to be trapped.

Similarly, security personnel, including the police, army, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Department of State Security, DSS, fire fighters, officials of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, as well as staff of the Owerri Capital Development Authority, OCDA, were on ground to assist in rescue operations.

Different civil and engineering companies brought out varying types of equipment to help in the rescue operation.

Governor Hope Uzodinma's Deputy Chief of Staff, Mr. Emeka Agbo, who led some government officials to the scene, told newsmen that "more than 20 persons are believed to be trapped in the rubbles."

Although the cause of the building collapse was not very clear at press time, some experts believe it would not be far from structural defect.

Saturday Vanguard was told that the Vice President, Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, COREN, Chief Venitius Igiri, was expected to lead a team of engineers to the scene to assess the development.