

NEWS

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Kenyatta market demolition: Six die of frustration, poverty

No less than six traders, who owned shops at the old Kenyatta electrical market in Uwani Enugu, have reportedly died of frustration and bankruptcy.

Many of the traders are also reported to be critically sick, cannot pay their medical bills and can no longer fend for their families, even as most of the traders who used to own shops have become street traders with different dimensions of hardship on them.

The development was made known by the chairman of tenants of Enugu plaza of the National Youth Council of Nigeria, NYCN, Chief Louis Obi, when the National President of the council, Amb. Sukubo Seraigbe Sukubu, visited the scene of the demolished plaza, during the weekend.

The plaza which contained over 1, 500 lockup shops was in August 2022 reduced to rubbles by the Enugu state government during the administration of the immediate past Governor of Enugu state, Mr. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi.

Speaking during an interactive session with the Enugu youth council, the former shop keepers and the visiting youth president, Obi disclosed that the now empty large expanse of land used to contain their well-built 500 lockup shops with a car park.

“We were there legally and never had any problem with our landlord which is the NYCN, but suddenly we started hearing that we shall go. In August last year we woke up to see the area cordoned off with police and every other security personnel. We started hasty packing under which many lost their goods and properties. They gave us one hour to pack and immediately the bulldozers moved in and reduced the whole plaza to rubble.

“Now, six of our members have died, we are now like refugees, we don’t have shops any longer. What we are praying for is for the President (of NYCN) to help us regain our means of livelihood. We’re now walking corpses, some have even relocated out of the town,” Obi lamented.

Chairman of the Youth council in Enugu state, Comrade Henry Atigwe stated that the affected tenants built the demolished edifice by former Governor Ugwuanyi, under Build, Operate and Transfer, BOT, agreement with the state council.

Atigwe narrated that the government first came and told the council that the Plaza violated the purpose clause of the Youth Center, but retreated when the council proved that the plaza did not violate any town planning rule.

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“With threats that we should vacate the premises, we went and obtained a court injunction, yet the government demolished the over 500 shops. Since then the tenants have been idle, some dead and others hospitalized. We have remained in the court since then seeking for our property and for compensation to be paid.” Atigwe stated.


“The cost of the demolished building is more than N1.5 billion; this is outside the goods that were destroyed. Before the demolition, we obtained a court order against the demolition, but the government used all security apparatus to demolish it. It’s our belief that with your coming, you can seek dialogue with the state government to make amends while we are still in court,” Ugwuoke told Sukubu.

Responding, the NYCN President, Sukubu said that the council was not going to physically fight the state government but would use legal means to seek redress, noting that even while engaging with the state government, the legal process continues.


“It’s a matter of time, don’t be afraid, the property and the land still belong to us, I’m not scared and the tenants should not be scared because we’ll come out victorious. The law provides ways a government can take away land from individuals or groups.

“It’s sad that some people have died and others are subjected to perpetual poverty. The land belongs to the NYCN and will continue to be ours. As the President, I will not fold my hands to see our property taken away from us. The end will be in our favour by God’s grace and no one will take away the land from us,” Sukubu said.

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