

Pentecostal Church Collapse That Killed 115 Under Investigation

Nigeria launched a court inquest on Friday into the collapse of a church guesthouse in September that killed at least 115 people including 84 South Africans and sparked a diplomatic spat between the two countries.

South African officials accused Nigerian authorities of not doing enough to investigate the Sept. 12 accident at the church compound in Lagos of T.B. Joshua.

The accident occurred as three more stories were being added to the two-story church building. South Africa said Nigerian authorities did not react quickly enough to rescue those trapped under the rubble and complains that Nigeria has still not released the bodies of victims for repatriation and burial.

Pretoria also called for a formal investigation.

The Lagos State Federal High Court was expected to hear evidence from several parties, including Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), a pathologist representing the Lagos State Chief Medical Director, a representative of the South African government, and the church itself.

The presiding judge adjourned the hearing until Oct. 28, requesting that all the parties provide written witness statements.

Nigeria has a history of building collapses due to shoddy construction, with 130 reported incidents from 2007 to 2012 in Lagos alone, its vast and largest city of 21 million people.

South Africa's High Commissioner to Nigeria, Lulu Louis Mnguni, was also in court on Friday and said his country was

hoping the bodies would be identified.

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