

Nightclub roof collapse kills hundreds in Dominican Republic

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The catastrophic collapse of the Jet Set nightclub roof in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in the early hours of Tuesday has shocked people around the world.

The roof of one of the most iconic venues in the Dominican capital suddenly caved in as attendees enjoyed a concert by popular merengue artist Rubby Pérez. With rescuers still searching for bodies, 221 people have been found dead, while about 200 others were injured.

Jet Set nightclub, renowned for its “Monday Merengue Nights,” was packed with over 1,000 attendees when disaster struck, while some reports indicate that it had reached full capacity of over 2,000. Most of the victims were workers or middle-class attendees who paid about \$30 to experience the atmosphere at the top club.

Pérez, 69, was found dead in the rubble. A beloved artist in the Dominican Republic and internationally, Pérez was among the most recognizable voices in merengue music with hits like “Tu vas a volar,” “Volveré,” and “Enamorado de Ella.” Videos showing his hypnotic stage presence and merry vibe just minutes before the disaster have gone viral, filling fans with grief.

Other prominent figures among the deceased include former MLB players Octavio Dotel and Tony Blanco, and Monte Cristi provincial governor Nelsy Cruz.

Relatives have flocked to the site, hospitals, and forensic institutes in search of missing loved ones. Shailyn Peña, the BBC reports, spent her 17th birthday waiting outside the rubble for news of her father and other family members who were trapped inside. Like many others, she expressed frustration at the lack of updates.

Crowds, with many holding pictures of relatives with

the word MISSING, also gathered at the National Institute of Forensic Pathology to hear officials read aloud names of identified victims. Screams of anguish broke out as names of loved-ones were announced. Others moved from hospital to hospital in desperation. For families still awaiting answers, each passing hour compounds their grief.

Doctors warn that some hospitalized victims remain in critical condition having endured hours trapped with multiple injuries.

Rescue teams from Israel, Mexico, and Puerto Rico joined local crews to search for survivors using thermal cameras and sonar technology. Over 189 individuals have been rescued so far. As hopes were fading since no survivors have been found since Tuesday afternoon, *The Guardian* reported that responders have stopped searching for survivors.

Emergency Operations Director Juan Manuel Méndez assured families that efforts would continue until every person is accounted for. However, with much of the site already searched, authorities are transitioning to recovery operations focused on locating bodies.

The cause of the collapse remains under investigation. Eyewitnesses reported dust falling moments before large chunks of concrete came crashing down on concertgoers. The building’s history raises questions about oversight: originally a cinema from the 1970s, Jet Set underwent renovations in 2010 and 2015, but had not adhered to modern safety standards.

This highlights systemic failures in enforcing building codes, which have themselves failed to keep up with advancements in science and engineering. While Jet Set catered to a relatively more affluent crowd, its structural vulnerabilities reflect a broader neglect that is even more pronounced for the working

class.

President Luis Abinader expressed condolences for the victims at the site and attended the funeral of Pérez, but criticisms have been raised that the government is covering up a record of negligence and ignored warnings.

The owner of a neighboring building, Karina Suero Moquete, told the media that she had filed one of several lawsuits against the building over sound pollution and nonstop vibration all night long. Prosecutors responded to them that, “It is part of the national brand.”

The prominence of the locale and the oligarchic character of the Espaillat family that owns it, has raised widespread suspicions of an official coverup. Dozens have commented on a statement on social media published by Antonio Espaillat calling for his arrest.

Only a day before disaster struck, Abinader announced 15 measures modeled after Trump’s fascist agenda and openly advertised as “painful” to crack down on Haitian immigrants. These include raising the number of troops at the border with Haiti to 11,000, building a border wall, new restrictions on migrants’ access to healthcare and public education, and several actions to drive out Haitians from the labor market.

That day, the administration boasted of a historic record of deportations, reaching 187,983 in six months. The announcements, made in the framework of “national security,” have set the stage for media outlets to scapegoat Haitian immigrants to divert attention from the Jet Set club disaster and systemic issues like infrastructure safety. Some tabloids have already begun denouncing the use of Haitian construction workers.

Disasters like the Jet Set Club collapse or the 2017 Grenfell Tower inferno in London, England expose how profit-driven neglect make preventable mass death and suffering inevitable. While in Grenfell’s case, cost-cutting measures led to unsafe cladding; inadequate oversight at Jet Set allowed structural vulnerabilities to persist unnoticed.

As Dominicans are left grappling with grief and anger, some media commentators are calling for stricter enforcement of building codes and greater transparency in government actions.

Such events, however, underscore that disasters are rarely isolated incidents—they are symptoms of systemic failures prioritizing profit over human lives in capitalist

society. As in the case of the Grenfell fire and the construction firm and companies responsible, families and the working class hoped to settle accounts and make changes to prevent future catastrophes. The Dominican ruling class is already conceiving a whitewash as it exploits the disaster to promote nationalist chauvinism and anti-Haitian xenophobia.



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