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Title: Death toll in Dominican Republic nightclub tragedy nears 200

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SCENE OF DISASTER: A drone view shows workers during recovery efforts at the site of the collapsed Jet Set nightclub in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Picture: RICARDO ARDUENGO/REUTERS

Death toll in Dominican Republic nightclub tragedy nears 200

A devastating roof collapse at a popular nightclub in the Dominican Republic capital has claimed at least 184 lives, authorities said late on Wednesday, as the search for survivors turned increasingly grim.

The nightclub collapsed overnight on Tuesday and families were gathered outside the wreckage of the Jet Set club in Santo Domingo, anxious for information about their missing relatives and sharing photos with police.

"We are not going to abandon anybody," Juan Manuel Mendez, head of the country's emergency operations centre,

said at a press conference.

Emergency crews would continue to work until the last body was found, but hopes of finding more survivors under the rubble were diminishing while no-one had been pulled out alive in more than 24 hours, Mendez said.

"In the coming hours there will be a transition from a search and rescue phase to the recovery of bodies," presidential spokesperson Homero Figueroa said in a statement.

Families continued to hold out hope. Relatives and friends of people still missing held their photos and described the

clothes they were wearing, hoping that it would help identify their loved ones.

Earlier authorities reported 155 people had been rescued from the rubble and transferred to hospitals. The exact number of people inside the club at the time of the collapse remained unclear.

The tragedy unfolded during a concert by popular Dominican singer Rubby Perez.

The event, which had drawn politicians, athletes and other prominent figures, turned into a nightmare after midnight as the roof collapsed. Perez was one of the victims

and the ministry of culture held a tribute yesterday to honour his memory as "one of the great figures of the country's art" and the merengue scene.

President Luis Abinader attended the funeral ceremony on Wednesday of Nelsy Cruz, governor of the northern Monte Cristi province and sister of former MLB player Nelson Cruz, a seven-time All-Star.

Pitcher Octavio Dotel and slugger Tony Blanco, both former Major League Baseball players, were also killed.

The son of the public works and communications minister also died — Reuters