

# Story of Lombok Earthquake Victims Choosing to Flee to Hills

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Lalu Fikri (42) was spending time with his wife and three sons. Three children of the same age as his youngest son were playing while reading books under the shelter of a temporary house built by UGM students. Although it is not yet complete, the building was a home for Lalu Fikri because his house has been flattened to the ground and only part of the kitchen and bathroom walls remained.

While sitting on the marble floor of his previous kitchen, Fikri could only stare at the ruins of his house that were piled up. "I really want to clean up the debris so I can start to rebuild it immediately," he said, sighing.

Most of the houses at Karang Pansor suffered the same fate because the remnants of demolished buildings still piling up in their own locations. "I hope the government would send a backhoe to help clean up the debris."

Fikri said he wanted to build his house gradually. However, the situation made it impossible. All this time, he only lived in refugee camps located on the hill 2 kilometers away from his house. Before nightfall, he returned to the hill and went to see his house in the morning.



The parking attendant at the ferry port to Gili Trawangan still remembered clearly the earthquake that collapsed his house at the end of July. At that time, he had just returned from work and was about to unwind in his room. Meanwhile, his wife and 5-year-old child were attending a recitation at a neighbor's house. He was still calm when the first earthquake struck. However, when a much larger aftershock occurred only a few minutes later, Fikri immediately rushed out of his house to save himself while looking for his wife and youngest child. He found the neighbors already gathered outside. The lights went dark immediately due to power outages. This aftershock has knocked down the walls of Fikri's house.

Aside from houses, the large earthquake also destroyed a mosque located 10 meters away from Fikri's house. Three people were found dead while praying at the mosque. A toddler, the child of Fikri's neighbor died that night. "We did not have time to save those who were crushed by buildings and we immediately fled to hills in case there would be a tsunami," recalled Fikri.

Fikri and his wife, together with all the villagers climbed two kilometers up the hill that night. "We did not bring anything but the clothes attached to our bodies."

That night, Fikri said, the villagers of Bangsal fled to the hill while looking from a distance, hoping that tsunami would not drown their village.

Luckily, the tsunami did not occur. Even so, they all chose to take refuge on the hill. They returned to their houses in the morning while looking for the dead who had not been evacuated.

Agus Riyanto (27), Karang Petak villager, stated he was still at the port office that night. As a night watchman, he happened to be alone in the office because two of his partners were out to buy some food. Shortly after the earthquake, houses on the beach collapsed. Agus immediately ran to his house which was less than half a kilometer away. He remembered his four-year-old son alone at home. Along the way, he watched people relying on the light from cellphones looking for family members amidst the rubble. "I imagined my child who was alone at home," said Agus, who claimed to panic and even cried while running through the dark roads.

While praying in his heart, Agus prayed for his son's safety. He ran as hard as he could while rummaging the ruins that blocked part of the road to his house. God granted his prayers. From a distance, Agus watched his son being hugged by his sibling and mother in front of the house. "I was relieved. My son was still alive."

Agus was beyond grateful that his entire family could survive. His wife who was working in a hotel in Gili Trawangan that night reported that she was safe. "I asked my wife whether the water goes up

and she said it was normal. But everyone in the village had fled to the hill,” he recalled.

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