

Pet owners seek to delay demolition of Florida condo tower

 nypost.com/2021/07/04/pet-owners-seek-to-delay-demolition-of-florida-condo-tower

Pet owners who lived in what still stands of Florida's partly collapsed condo tower want the structure's planned demolition delayed until any animals who might still be alive there are rescued.

The search for human and animal survivors in the building's rubble in Surfside next to Miami Beach was suspended Saturday as officials prepare to demolish the remaining part of the 12-story structure ahead of Tropical Storm Elsa.

But an online petition has been started to halt the demolition until "all animals are safe" and already garnered almost 4,300 signatures, the Miami Herald reported.

Julie Miró, a Miami resident who signed the petition, said she also sent emails to Gov. Ron DeSantis, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and local emergency officials urging them to try to save any animals stuck inside the teetering building before it is knocked down.

"If there were people in there, they would have found a way," Miro told the Herald of officials overseeing the rescue effort. "But they don't think animals are as valuable."

Dahlia Kanes, director of the Miami Coalition Against Breed Specific Legislation, said her organization believes that at least several dogs and cats, a guinea pig and a few parakeets are still stuck in the structure.

She told the paper that she spoke with a woman whose dog, Daisy, and two cats were in her living room when part of the building crumbled into a massive pile of rubble July 24.

Daisy is the name of the dog in the Edgar Gonzalez family. Gonzalez, a lawyer, remains missing, while his wife, Angela, and their 15-year-old daughter, Deven, are hospitalized.

Kanes said her office began getting calls about pets since the building collapsed but she understands that the structure is too unstable to send crews in to rescue the animals.

"The reality is grim. Most likely all those animals are either dead or in the rubble below," she said.

On Saturday, Levine Cava said: "Many in the community have raised this concern [about the building's pets]."

"I want to be clear that search and rescue conducted three separate searches, a primary, a secondary and a tertiary. And, they found no animals. I was informed this morning that they did a sweep with cameras and found no animals at this time.

"I've also been in touch with the contractor and provided locations of animals that were given to me who might be in the building," Levine Cava said.

“They are aware and doing everything they might do just to make an additional search,” she said of rescue workers. “But I want to be very clear that they would not be doing that on-site because they are not going to be able to go into those units.

“It is not safe for anyone to go beyond the first floor,” she said.

In the first few hours after the building’s collapse, firefighters rescued one fourth-floor family’s dog, Rigatoni, along with the mother and daughter, the Herald reported.

When someone saw their cat, Coco, on the balcony, firefighters used a cherry picker to leave food and water for the pet.

Levine Cava said that as a pet owner herself, she understands many people consider their animals to be family members.

“I just want you to know that additional efforts have been made and are being made,” she said.