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IG's aide dies in fire



Written by Boco Edet

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Inspector General of Police Mike Okiro

Tragedy struck at the Police Officer's Mess at Police Cantonment, Area Eleven, Garki, Abuja yesterday when the Principal Staff Officer II to the Police Inspector General, Mr. James Mshelia was burnt to death inside his apartment. .

The deceased, who was one of the officers recently promoted from the rank of Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner of Police by the Police Service Commission, was said to be staying at the Officer's Mess guest rooms due to accommodation problems in Abuja.

An eyewitness said the cries of a senior police officer at 12 midnight attracted other police officers that reside close to the Mess.

"The shout of 'fire' attracted us to the Mess and when we got there, the officer's apartment was on fire and we could not gain access because of the strong burglary proof on the door that was locked," he said.

He said policemen tried their best to rescue the officer but the door posed a problem before fire service officials arrived 45 minutes later to quench the fire.

"When we arrived at the incident scene, we came with buckets of water that was used to quench part of the fire and rescue people in the place," he said.

Another police officer told Daily Trust that the deceased officer apparently dozed off while he was cooking food. The fire later spread to the rest of the apartment and Mshelia was suffocated by the smoke, he said. By the time his remains were recovered, they were burnt by the fire, another policeman said.

Our reporter learnt that the wife of the deceased left for home Monday morning after spending some days with her husband in the apartment.

Mshelia served as Assistant Commissioner of Police A (Administration), Kano State Police Command, before he was transferred to the Force Headquarters Abuja, as PSO II to the IGP.

First callers at the fire scene included Deputy Inspector-General of Police Mr Ogbonnaya Onovo and the Assistant Inspector-General in charge of Zone 7, who directed the guards within the place not to allow any person except police officers inside the Mess.

Policemen inside the barrack wondered why the barracks has no fire service van. "This is a shame because we had to contact various fire services establishments that came to our aid to put out the fire 45 minutes after it started," one of them said.

Our reporter was stopped midway inside the Mess and he observed burnt areas in the place.

A police commissioner who wore mufti was seen inspecting the scene and praying for the repose of the soul of the officer.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Inyang from the force public relations office declined to comment and referred our reporter to his boss at the police headquarters. "Just as you came is the same way I came and you can only get details from the force public relations officer," he said. At the police headquarters, the force public relations was not available to comment.

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