

Candle fire kills baby in Lagos

By Olisah Benjamin

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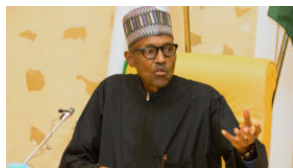
Youths attack fire fighters for arriving late to the scene

Residents of No. 6, Soyinka Street, Bariga in Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State yesterday woke up to the tragedy caused by a midnight fire, which burnt a five-month old infant beyond recognition, left two other children in critical condition, and destroyed property worth millions of naira.

The fire, which begun at about 11:20p.m. on Tuesday night was reportedly caused by a candlelight, which had been lit by one of the tenants in the one-storey apartment. The mother of the baby had gone to ease herself in the toilet when the candle, which had exhausted its wax, melted on an inflammable material, leading to the fire engulfing the whole room.

Spreading like a wildfire, the inferno escalated to other parts of the building, which alerted neighbours, who quickly mobilized to salvage the situation. They were able to rescue two children who were trapped in the building, but could do nothing to prevent the fire from burning the five-month old baby to death.

Efforts of The Guardian to have a chat with the mother of the toddler and two rescued kids, who had unknowingly begun the fire, proved abortive, as she was engaged in a non-stop heart-rending wailing.



According to another tenant who pleaded for anonymity, she said the fire could have resulted in more casualties but for the quick intervention of neighbours.

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"I was outside when the fire started. It was the joint effort of we the tenants and the residents that enabled us to quench the fire. It was a tough battle that lasted for almost four hours all through the night. However, we were able to rescue two children, but unfortunately, a baby was killed in the fire."

There was a mild drama when the dust had settled at the scene of the fire yesterday morning, as embittered youths attacked fire fighters, who were responding to distress call hours after the incident was reported. They threw stones at their bus, broke the glasses of their vehicles and nearly injured some of the officials. The fire fighters immediately beat a retreat to avoid the violent scene before the situation got worse.

One of the youths who spoke to The Guardian said they took the violent action because of the lateness of the fire service to the scene. "We called them immediately the fire started. They told us they were on their way. An hour later, we called them again; they said they were filling their tank with water. The third time we called them, they told us they were stuck in traffic. Why then should they come now that the situation had been put under control? Do they want to steal our achievement?" the furious man asked.

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