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Two months after losing two children to kerosene explosion:

Posted by: Kunle AKINRINADE in Special Report 2 days ago

Since a pall of grief fell on the household of Emmanuel Olisakwe and his wife, Jane, about eight months ago, the couple has continued to drench their couch with tears.

The Nation newspaper had reported about a month ago how the couple lost their two children to a fire outbreak on December 26, 2012, following a kerosene explosion that rocked their two-room apartment at No 14, Ikire Street, off Akeredolu Street, Olambe, Ogun State.

The fireballs had first landed on the couple's five-year-old son, Miracle, burning him beyond recognition. He died the next day. Their eight-year-old daughter, Ebube, would have escaped unhurt, but the fire balls landed on her newly-fixed hair and she was severely burnt. She battled death for 17 days before she died in the hospital.

Emmanuel was severely burnt while trying to light a lantern shortly after he loaded its tank with kerosene. He was taken to the Burns Unit of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) for treatment.

He escaped death by a whisker due to the prompt treatment he received at the hospital. He would have been discharged from the hospital about three weeks ago, but he has not been able to go home because he cannot defray his medical bill which, according to his wife, is about N700, 000. "He is removed from the bed whenever there is a new patient who cannot get a bed space," she added.

She spoke further on the family's plight and how she had been running from pillar to post in search of money.

She said: "Until the unfortunate incident, my husband was a tricycle operator and breadwinner of the family. I have practically been living on charity since then and I don't know where else to run to for assistance.

"Although some people had forwarded some money to us shortly after your paper published the story, it was not enough to clear the hospital bill. We have been told to settle the bill or my husband would not be allowed to go home or sleep on the bed anymore.

"I don't know what to do. That is why I'm asking for help from the members of the public."

Speaking with our correspondent, Emmanuel said: "I was discharged about a month ago, but I cannot go home because I have not been able to pay my medical bill. I have been asked to pay or forget about going home for now."

Emmanuel, a native of Umunuko-Upkor community in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra

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State, further shared his plight with our reporter, saying: "My condition has improved and I can now walk with the aid of a walker. But my greatest problem is the unpaid bill because I have been told to pay up by this weekend or face the risk of being asked to vacate my bed for other patients. At the moment, doctors have stopped attending to me except I pay for my treatment. Life has turned nightmarish. I don't know what to do because my wife has fruitlessly been looking for money to settle the bill. It's almost a hopeless situation and I just hope that kind-hearted Nigerians would come to my rescue."

Jane, recalled the incident, saying: "The incident happened on December 26, 2012, at about 7 pm. My husband had asked me to prepare yam and fried egg for dinner, but I told him that there was no kerosene at home.

"While returning home, he bought kerosene at a filling station in Akute. I was trying to slice some yam when I heard my 10-month-old baby's cry. I quickly left the yam to attend to the baby.

"Since it was in the night, my husband was about lighting the lantern after putting Kerosene into it, but the lantern exploded and burnt him and my kids.

"We just moved into the house about six months before the fire incident. Our 10-year-old son, Victor, is about entering secondary school, and it has not been easy coping with other domestic responsibilities.

"In fact, my son's education would have been truncated but for the intervention of the proprietress of his school and some of her teaching staff who offered him a lifeline.

"I have been married to my husband since 2001 and we had four children. But we have lost two of them now. I have since been squatting with one of my friends because I cannot cope with living in the same house where the fire had killed my son and daughter and rendered my husband incapacitated.

"He is a native of Nnewi, Anambra State and a former employee of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE). He lost his job after a major shake-up in the firm and has since been operating a commercial tricycle to earn living."

Anyone who is willing to offer financial assistance can forward money to Mrs. Jane Nkechi Ollisakwe's First Bank account-3069048378. She can also be reached on 08139234474

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