

## Family of six burnt to death in Benue mystery fire

The police in Makurdi are currently investigating to unravel how a family of six got burnt to death, by a fire outbreak. Mr. Oye Lawani, his wife Elizabeth and four of their children's roasted bodies, were discovered lying in ashes at their razed flat located at No 14, Young Christian College Street, Anyam Kor, Gboko East of Benue State.

Neighbours said they woke up to discover the roasted bodies, while eye-witnesses said the house caught fire at 11:00p.m Thursday. But no one could immediately tell exactly what the source of the blaze was. Some neighbours rushed to the scene but were only able to save the late family's rickety Honda Accord car from catching fire.

According to James Ayankaa, an eye-witness, "we watched helplessly as all the doors of the flat had gulped fire almost at the same time.

"We heard people (not the deceased) shouting for help! When we came out all the doors had gotten fire. And there was no way one could enter to save them. Some people were praying and wishing that no one was trapped.

"We only broke the wind screen of his car, from where someone entered in and put the gear on neutral, after which we pushed it away from the burning building.

"As the fire burnt, we retired home to sleep. This morning we came to the house by 4:00p.m and shockingly discovered that Lawani, his wife and four kids were burnt," Ayankaa said.

Fire and smoke were still billowing up when The Nation visited the scene yesterday. Their bodies were taken to a morgue. Remains of burnt bones were still left on the floor.

A refrigerator, stove, generator, television set, bottles, utensils, furniture, books and other valuables were seen razed.

Sympathizers at the incident, discussed in groups, while some were seen inspecting the rubbles. It was also difficult reasoning that the fire outbreak may have originated from their generator which was seen burnt inside their sitting room.

The 37-year old burnt building is occupied by the deceased family and other neighbours -all of them tenants. The biggest puzzle is that the late Lawani's wife was said to have telephoned their neighbours who escaped the blaze.

Lawani, 57, is a Yoruba based in Gboko. He was billed to travel for Christmas yesterday. His eldest son, who slept at a different apartment, was early at his father's house for the trip, only to be greeted by the tragedy.