

# Widow loses three children to Lagos fire

December 29, 2016



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• Nzedibas' apartment Photo: Samson Folarin

## Samson Folarin

A widow, Mrs. Ngozi Nzediba, has lost the three children she has after fire gutted the family's one-room apartment on Liasu Road, in the Ikotun Egbe area of Lagos State.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that Ngozi had asked the children to prepare noodles and locked them up in the room around 2pm on Tuesday.

She was said to have left them to buy some things on the street when the fire engulfed the apartment, leaving the children with no chance of escape.

The three children, identified as Chiamaka (female, nine years old); Emmanuel (male, seven years old) and Chigozie (male, five years old), reportedly sustained burns and were rushed to a private hospital in the area.

They, however, died on Wednesday.

When our correspondent visited 15 Ikuna Street, where the incident happened, he observed some sympathisers discussing the incident.

Our correspondent gathered that the children's father died about four years ago.

A tenant in the house, who did not identify herself, said she was tending to her child when somebody raised the alarm about the fire.

She said, "It was a little boy that alerted us to the fire. I quickly picked my baby and ran out. I didn't know what led to the fire."

It was learnt that the children could have been rescued before they were burnt; but tenants in the house were preoccupied with saving their property and taking their children to safety.

fire was said to have escalated before residents were able to break the burglar proof bars of the room to rescue the children through the window, and douse the flames.

Resident, Bola Oguntinyinbo, blamed the children's mother for locking them up in the room.

She said, "She locked the door against the children and went out. The window had burglar-proof bars, which made it hard to save the children. It is unfortunate because she lost her husband about four and half years ago and had been taking care of the kids since then."

Our correspondent observed that the burnt clothes of the children were scattered outside the house.

A tenant, who was seen lamenting a personal loss, was prevented from speaking to our correspondent by the landlord's wife, who insisted that *PUNCH Metro* leave the area.

The landlord's wife, a fair woman, threatened to beat up our correspondent when he enquired about the fire.

At a point, the woman began calling some persons on the telephone, as this correspondent hurriedly left the scene.

She said, "We don't want this in the media. If you don't leave now, we will beat you up."

Our correspondent learnt that the landlord had gone to the Ikotun Police Division to report the matter, while Ngozi had been taken to a relative's house where she was expected to recover from the shock of the incident.

A police source said preliminary investigation showed that Ngozi asked her children to prepare meal in the room before leaving the house.

He said, "The incident happened on Tuesday around 2pm. There was no power supply in the area, so it had nothing to do with electricity. The woman left the children in the house and locked the door. She asked them to put noodles on fire. It is possible that the children didn't handle the stove well, which resulted in the tragedy.

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45 Director of the Lagos State Fire Service, Mr. Razak Fadipe, confirmed the incident.

said, "They didn't call us on time; they were busy battling the fire on their own and trying to save their property. Immediately we learnt of the incident, we sent men from the Agege Fire Station. The fire started in the family room and it ended there. When we arrived, we were told that the children had been taken to a hospital and we visited them. It was there we were told that their mother locked them inside the house and went out."

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Dolapo Badmos, said investigations had begun into the incident.

She said, "The three children died in the early hours of Wednesday after they sustained burns in the fire incident. All of them were underage. The scene has been visited by our operatives and photographs taken. We are investigating to find out the culpability of their mother who locked them inside the house."

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