

**METRO PLUS**

# Fire kills four-year-old Lagos pupil, destroys apartments

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Salvage Lane

***Afeez Hanafi***

Woe swept through Salvage Lane, Orile Iganmu, Lagos State, after a fire razed a bungalow in the area on Tuesday and killed a four-year-old girl, identified only as Ola.

The building, sandwiched between several houses and makeshift shops, was engulfed in fire and all its four apartments were razed, while residents lost valuables.

Ola, whose mother reportedly resides in Ebute-Meta, lived with her grandmother, popularly called Iya Arodu.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that the fire started at about 8.30pm from Iya Arodu's apartment and later escalated to adjoining flats.

Overwhelmed by the raging fire, the grandmother reportedly fled the apartment, leaving Ola behind.

It was learnt that residents and officials of the Lagos State Fire Service battled the fire before it was completely put out around 9.30pm.

The girl, however, did not make it as she was burnt to death.

When our correspondent visited the community on Wednesday, most residents were unwilling to reveal the immediate cause of the fire. They did not also allow *PUNCH Metro* to take pictures of the affected building.

A neighbour of Iya Arodu, Abiodun Jamiu, said he was relaxing with his wife and children at home when they were jolted by wails from outside.

Lamenting the consequence of the incident, he said he had no idea of where to relocate his wife and children to.

He said, "We thought some people were fighting. My wife went outside to see what was happening. She rushed back and said there was fire in Iya Arodu's apartment.

“There was a gate between our apartment and the woman’s flat. I opened the gate and went to her apartment to put out the fire, but it was too much for us to handle. People from outside also joined me.

“By the time firefighters came, it had subsided and they assisted to put it out completely. It also affected my apartment and our property was burnt.

“I don’t know how she escaped from the building, but the girl was trapped. She was probably too confused to think of rescuing the girl.

“I don’t know where to take my family to now. My children and wife passed the night at different places yesterday (Tuesday). The children could not go to school today (Wednesday) because we are unsettled. I passed the night in a mosque.”

Jamiu explained further that Ola was the only child of her mother and had been living with the grandma for a long time.

“She (Ola) attended a private school in our community. She was the only child of her mother. We cannot ascertain the cause of the fire now. It is only Iya Arodu that can tell us what led to it and she is not around now,” he added.

A resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, commended the swift response of firefighters from the Isolo Fire Station.

“But if there is a fire service station close to us, the destruction might not be as much as this,” he added.

The Director, Lagos State Fire Service, Mr. Rasaq Fadipe, who confirmed Ola’s death, said the residents collected her corpse from emergency officials. He urged people to be safety conscious and report fire incidents promptly.

He said, “The building has four self-contained apartments and they are all affected. The fire started from the apartment where the deceased child lived. We tried to locate her parents, but we could not get them. Fire station from Isolo responded.

“If there is any fire outbreak, people should alert fire service immediately. They should not assume that they can handle it. They also need to be safety conscious.

“I will advise landlords associations to focus their meeting on the security and fire safety in their meetings.”

