

Kerosene explosion kills four family members in Calabar

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Ada Wodu, Calabar

four persons have been killed in a kerosene explosion in Ikot Ekpo community, Calabar, Cross River State.

The kerosene, suspected to have been adulterated, was being poured into a lantern when it exploded on Monday night.

A 45-year-old man, Esuabana Thomas, and two of his children and an in-law were killed in the explosion.

The children were identified as Esua Thomas, 14; and Edet Thomas, 12; while the in-law was identified as Mathias.

The victims were said to be indigenes of Ukwu Eburutu, in the Odukpani Local Government Area of the state.

The deceased's landlord, Efiom Efanga, said Esuabana's wife and daughter survived the incident.

Efanga explained that he did not live in the house with the tenants, adding that his attention was drawn to the tragedy around 10pm.

He said, "I got a call around 10pm that there was a fire incident in my house, so I rushed down there. By the time I got there, the neighbours had succeeded in putting out the fire. But they did not know that people had been burnt inside because it seemed there were no screams.

"It was after the fire was extinguished that we discovered three persons inside who were already dead. Another victim, who was also fatally burnt, was rushed to hospital, but he gave up the ghost on the way and his dead body was brought back. The only survivor among the children is the daughter. I met her in a church close to my compound, very frightened.

"She told me that the mum asked the elder brother to refuel the lantern, but the boy refused and went inside. After some minutes, the mum decided to send her to refuel the lantern; as soon as she poured the kerosene into the already lit but dim lantern, there was an explosion. She said she threw the lantern away and ran out. She said the mother was outside to urinate when the explosion occurred."

A relative of the deceased, Mr Samuel Inyang, who described the incident as mysterious, said the explosion happened around 9.30pm.

He said, “It happened in the kitchen. The four persons who died were in the room, but we cannot explain why they could not run out through the door. How can kerosene explode like a bomb? It is a mystery that the door was open, but our brother, his children and in-law could not escape.”

He alleged that the kerosene might have been adulterated, and appealed to government agencies to stop illegal bunkering, which he said encouraged dealers to mix all types of things with kerosene.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Irene Ugbo, confirmed the incident, adding that investigation was ongoing.

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