

Man who burnt stepchildren blames temper, more victims die

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By Peter Dada

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A 64-year-old man, Ojo Joseph, who set ablaze his five stepchildren in Ondo town, Ondo State, was on Wednesday paraded at the state police command headquarters, Akure.

The suspect reportedly committed the act while the victims were asleep following a disagreement between him and their mother at the Fagun area of Ondo town, Ondo State, last Saturday.

One of the stepchildren died on the spot, while two others died at the hospital.

Parading the suspect, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs Funmilayo Odunlami, said the suspect would be charged at the completion of investigation.

Odunlami confirmed that three of the five victims were confirmed dead at the Federal Medical Centre, Owo, where they were receiving treatment.

Speaking, the 64-year-old suspect said he committed the act out of anger because his wife and her children ganged up to beat him up in his house.

He said, “On that day (last Friday) around 7pm, I had a quarrel with my wife and those children joined my wife to beat me up; I was even injured. That was how they were doing whenever we quarreled. So, after they had all slept, out of anger, I went to get petrol and poured into their room and put fire.

“Before now, my wife was no longer taking care of me and yet, whenever quarrel happened between us, she and her children would gang up to beat me up.”

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Meanwhile, the father of the victims, Mr Liadi Akinfolarin, has demanded justice.

Akinfolarin stated that he separated from their mother after she packed out of their matrimonial home, left the children to him and married the suspect.

He said, “I work on the farm as a tractor driver. The children used to stay with me whenever I did not go to the farm. At times, I would stay on the farm for three to four days before coming home and during that period, the children stayed with their mother till I come back from work.

“When I’m back from the farm on Friday, I would call their mother and they would stay in my place till Monday, when they would return to school. After closing, they would go to their mother till when I’ll be around.

“On that fateful Friday, I returned home late from work, so I couldn’t call them because I knew they would come to my place on Saturday. But around 4pm, I received a call from an unknown person who told me that the house of my former wife’s husband was on fire. But I did not answer the person because the woman is no longer my wife.

“My phone rang again around 6pm, and the person said my children wanted to speak with me. I heard my first daughter’s voice that their stepfather set them ablaze with petrol and they had been taken to the general hospital in Ondo.

“On getting there, I saw my children writhing in pain. Some were burnt beyond recognition. Their corpses have been deposited in a morgue.

“The remaining children are at FMC, Owo, with the support of oxygen. I have promised them that after this trip to the farm, I will stop going and look for something else to do so that I can take care of them properly. They only stay with their mother in her husband’s house whenever I’m not at home. All I want now is justice.”