

Man, pregnant wife, 3 children, relative die after rice meal

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2019 2:41 AMIN **NEWSBY NWAFOR**



...The children were so brilliant, proprietor gave them scholarship—Teacher

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...Late woman's mom slumps, dies

A family of six—man, pregnant wife, his three children and a female relative— were found dead yesterday, in their apartment at 19 Olowora, Mafoloku area of Lagos State.



The family were said to have eaten jollof rice the previous (Tuesday) night.

However, one of the children, a twin, aged four, survived the attack, but was still undergoing treatment at press time.

Though there was no official report on the cause of the death, the family was suspected to have either been suffocated by an insecticide which was sprayed in their one-room apartment on Tuesday night, or died of food poisoning.

Identities of the deceased are Mr. Zakaria, popularly called Cool Money; pregnant wife, popularly called Iya Aliyah; Aliyah, 11; Firdaous, 9; Tawio, 4, and Wasilia, 17, a relative that came to spend the holiday with the family.

...late woman's mother

Vanguard gathered the mother of late Mrs Zakaria slumped and died when news of her daughter's death was related to her.

The aged woman was said to have visited her daughter the previous day, but left for Badagry at night, turning down request by her pregnant daughter to pass the night with them.

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It was learned that at about 9a.m. yesterday, curious neighbours discovered that no member of the Zakaria family had come out of their apartment, which was unusual.

After several attempts were made to wake them up by knocking on their door, the neighbours had to forcefully open it.

The family's neighbour, Aina Adeleke, told Vanguard: "Immediately we forced the door open, we found seven of them lying down like they were asleep. On closer look, we observed that Mr. Zakaria a.k.a. Cool Money, was dead.

"Wasilia had foamy substance in her mouth, while the corpse of Firdaous and Taiwo (one of the twins) were very cold and stiff like they had died several hours ago.

"As soon as we discovered that Mrs Zakaria a.k.a. (Iya Aliyah), Kehinde and Aliyah were still breathing, we rushed them to the hospital. Unfortunately, only one of the twins, Kehinde, survived, while Aliyah and her mother died at the hospital."

The emotional Adeleke added: "Sincerely, I can't say for sure what happened to them or what killed them. But we found out that they ate jollof rice last (Tuesday) night. It is only God that can say what exactly happened to the family."

It was learned that one of the twins, Kehinde, who survived at a private hospital was later referred to Lagos Teaching University Hospital, LUTH.

... at the scene

When Vanguard got to the scene of the incident, it was like a tourist centre, as people trooped in.

Policemen, led by the Divisional Police Officer in charge of Makinde Division, were sighted at the scene collecting items for forensic investigation, while the bodies were moved into the ambulance of Lagos respond unit by officials of Lagos State Emergency Agency, LASEMA.

Thereafter, the building was sealed off by health officials from the Oshodi Local Government Area, Bolade, Oshodi.

A staff of Bells Nursery and Primary School, where the children attended, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said: “The children were so brilliant that the owner of the school had to award them scholarship.”

Another resident, Azeez, said: “I was in the bathroom when I heard shouts from neighbours that something had happened to the Zakarias. I didn’t know it was serious until I got to their room and saw the lifeless bodies.

“Cool Money was very jovial and popular because he was an electrician and helped people in the street repair electrical appliances. His wife, Iya Aliyah, sold shoes and bags at Ajibolu Market, in Mafoluku. That is why there is so much crowd here.”

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It was gathered that late Cool Money was a contract staff at Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company, IKEDC.

Resident, LASEMA, Police

Lamenting, another resident, who simply gave his name as Lukmon, said: “If really the security officials who sealed the place, want to do a thorough investigation, they won’t have allowed any tenant or occupant in the building to take any item before sealing the entire building.

“Allowing them take things from the building would lead to loss of vital evidence.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Bosun Olukolade, Operational Head of LASEMA, who supervised the evacuation of the bodies, advised tenants of the building to restrain their movement into the deceaseds’ apartment, as fumigation would be carried out to prevent outbreak of diseases.

Contacted, Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Elkana Bala, said investigation into the incident had begun.

According to the Police spokesman, “when we got the distress call, we responded and found a 42-year-old man, his wife and three other persons dead. One of their children survived.”

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