

# One dead as fire guts 3 buildings at Lagos' Balogun market, Lagos

By Juliet Umeh

**L**AGOS—Traders at Balogun market, Lagos, yesterday, counted their losses as fire broke out on 32, Balogun Street and 34, Gbajumo Street of the market, killing one and destroying three buildings.

Vanguard gathered that the fire, which started around 9 a.m., from 34, Gbajumo Street, spread to 32, Balogun Street, where shoes are sold.

The fire affected three buildings and over 900 shops. Traders were seen running helter-skelter to salvage some of their goods and this led to commotion everywhere.

Some of the victims claimed that the fire was mysterious as they could not explain the cause.

One of the victims, who gave her name simply as Mrs. Ngozi, said: "I'm finished. I don't even know where to start from. I didn't remove anything from my shop. Please, government should come to my rescue.

"My shop is on the third floor and we didn't even know what was going on until some people alerted us. Now everything is gone."

Another affected shop owner, Mr. Oliver Ezedimbu, who claimed to have lost goods worth more than N40 billion said the fire was mysterious.

He said: "One of my friends said they saw about three people this morning, they brought out an egg, made some incantations and mashed it on the building and the fire started.

"The place where the fire started from, there was no electricity or generator and we don't know the cause of the fire.

"I don't know where to start from again. I have two shops in the building. I have a shop on the 5th and 4th floors. But there are about 900 shops in this building alone. My goods are worth over N40 million and I couldn't save anything."



*Scene of the inferno.*

Another victim, Mr. Kingsley Ezedimbu, said: "We are pleading with the government to help us clear the other street, Gbajumo Street. The problem is that when the fire service vehicle came around, they could not access the buildings on fire.

"The makeshift shops could not allow them to drive through. This has been happening in this Balogun. Any time there's a case like this, that place is always the issue. There will be no way to drive in because the fire started from the back, Gbajumo."

Responding, Permanent Secretary, Lagos

State Ambulance Service, LASEMA, Dr. Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said: "The agency activated its response plan and upon arrival at the scene, observed a three-storey building engulfed in flames.

"Further investigation gathered at the scene revealed that the fire emanated from the third floor which is used as a store.

"However, with the quick intervention of the LRT, LASG Fire Service and Fed Fire Service, the fire has been curtailed from spreading to other adjoining buildings."