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Germany: Fire At Apartment Building Kills 8

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BERLIN - A fire broke out early Sunday at an apartment building in southwestern Germany, killing eight people - a woman and seven of her children, authorities said. Three more people were rescued from the blazing building in Backnang, a town near Stuttgart, among them the children's grandmother. The family was of Turkish origin, and Turkey's ambassador to Germany headed to the scene.

Authorities were alerted to the blaze at 4:30 a.m. (0330 GMT). Once it had been brought under control, firefighters found the bodies of the 40-year-old woman and seven of her 10 children, aged between 6 months and 16, in two rooms of their second-floor apartment. The victims' names were not released.

Police and prosecutors said the fire almost certainly broke out in the apartment. They said in a statement that a heater was a focus of investigations, but another technical cause also was possible, and it could take days or weeks to pinpoint with certainty what started the blaze.

A German-Turkish cultural association has an office on the building's ground floor. Police said there was no indication that the fire might have been set deliberately or been a racist attack.

The building is part of a former leather factory that was converted into a row of three-story apartment blocks.

In Turkey, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag said it was "a very sad incident."

"We want the incident to be investigated thoroughly without leaving any room for doubt," he said. "We hope that the fire is not the result of an arson attack."

Written by Associated Press

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