

TITLE: Blaze that gutted Usindiso building described as abnormal fire

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## Article Summary

The article reports on the ongoing Commission of Inquiry into the fire that destroyed the illegally occupied Usindiso building in Johannesburg, South Africa. Lucas Thipe, a Platoon Commander from Johannesburg Emergency Services, testified that the fire was abnormal and that the boards used to partition rooms fuelled the flames.

The commission also heard about other fire hazards in the building, such as shacks made of flammable materials and blocked evacuation exits. The firefighters had to break locks to access every room and floor, and most of the charred bodies were found on the first and second floors. The inquiry aims to determine the cause of the fire and find ways to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

## Article Analysis

1. Does the article give a political economy contextual analysis of the event?

The article does not provide a political economy contextual analysis of the event. It focuses on the description of the fire and the ongoing commission of inquiry.

2. What according to the article, is/are the root cause/s of the event?

According to the article, the root cause of the event is the presence of fire hazardous materials, blocked emergency evacuation exits, and locked rooms and floors in the illegally occupied Usindiso building.

3. Does the article present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building?

The article does not present evidence of complicity between Johannesburg councillor representatives and organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building.

4. Does the article present evidence of NGOs (like SERI) engaging with organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building, on behalf of and in the interests of their clients (i.e. the tenants)?

The article does not present evidence of NGOs like SERI engaging with organised criminal syndicates that took over the control of the building, on behalf of and in the interests of their clients (i.e. the tenants).

5. Does the article present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum?

The article does not present potential solutions to the occupation by tenants of a hijacked building that has degenerated into a slum in respect of law enforcement, economic development/social upliftment, the provision of alternative accommodations, and the tenants' right to the city.

6. Does the article emphasise the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI (and other NGOs) regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act?

The article does not emphasize the conflictual relationship between city officials and the NGO SERI (and other NGOs) regarding different interpretations of the rights of tenants in terms of the law and specifically in terms of the PIE Act.

## Critical Analysis

Overall, this news article appears to be relatively objective in its reporting of the events surrounding the fire at the Usindiso building. The author, Busisiwe Radebe, provides information from a variety of sources, including the Platoon Commander of Johannesburg Emergency Services, Lucas Thipe, and presents their statements without adding personal commentary or bias.

However, there are a few potential biases or subjective language choices that can be identified in the article. For example, the use of the term "illegally occupied" to describe the Usindiso building suggests a negative connotation towards the occupants. It could be argued that this terminology implies that the occupants were responsible for the fire due to their occupation status, although this is not explicitly stated in the article.

Additionally, the phrase "the blaze that gutted the building" could be seen as emotionally charged language, as it evokes a sense of destruction and devastation. While this description accurately conveys the severity of the fire, it may elicit a particular emotional response from readers.

Furthermore, the use of the word "tragic" in the final sentence of the article could be seen as subjective language. While the fire was indeed a tragedy due to the loss of life and displacement of residents, describing it as such without attribution to a source could suggest a personal opinion on the part of the author.

Overall, while the article generally maintains an impartial tone, there are a few instances of potential bias or subjective language that should be noted.

## Contradiction Analysis

Based on the information provided in the news article, we can identify the following contradictions:

1. The headline describes the blaze as an "abnormal fire," suggesting that it was not a typical or usual fire. However, later in the article, the fire is described as being fuelled by boards used to partition rooms, suggesting that the fire may have been able to spread more easily due to these flammable materials. These descriptions seem contradictory as to the nature of the fire.
2. The article mentions that emergency evacuation exits were blocked by boxes, brick walls, and locked gates, which hindered the firefighters' access to every room and floor. However, it also mentions that the firefighters had to break through locks to access every room and floor. This raises a contradiction regarding the access to the rooms and floors during the fire.
3. The article states that charred bodies were found mostly on the first and second floors of the building. However, it does not provide any further information or context regarding this observation, leaving the readers with a lack of understanding about the distribution of the casualties throughout the building. This lack of explanation creates a contradiction in terms of the significance of the bodies' locations.

It is important to note that these contradictions may simply be inconsistencies or gaps in the information provided, and it would require further investigation or clarification to fully understand the circumstances of the fire.