

Unicef: Tahfiz tragedy totally avoidable

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 14 — Basic safety standards could have prevented the deaths of 23 people at a religious school fire here this morning, said child rights organisation Unicef.

Unicef representative to Malaysia Marianne Clark-Hattingh called the tragedy a “stark reminder” of the need for all schools to have measures in place to prevent and mitigate such incidents.

“Unicef calls for the establishment and enforcement of safety procedures and safeguards in all schools across Malaysia to ensure that such an unfortunate incident does not happen again.

“In addition, a full investigation needs to be conducted as soon as possible to establish the cause of this tragedy,” she said in a statement.

Twenty-three students and handlers at a private tahfiz school at Jalan Datuk Keramat died following a predawn fire today.

These privately-operated tahfiz schools come under the jurisdiction of state religious authorities.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said this afternoon that some tahfiz schools resisted the introduction of fire and safety rules over suspicions that these were a form of interference.

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