

Blaze in Philippine slum kills 16

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Sixteen people have been killed in a fire in a town in the central Philippines.

Eyewitnesses say the fire started in the early hours of the morning in a two-storey boarding house in Bacolod City.

It then spread to a shanty area nearby where at least 46 homes were destroyed.

Police say the fire may have been caused by a candle lit by one of the residents to honour the dead on All Souls' day.

The fire started after midnight and rapidly spread because of strong winds, gutting the slum community, Fire Marshal Pamela Candido said.

Several people leapt from windows at the height of the fire but others failed to wake up in time to save themselves, he said.

"Some mothers perished with their children," Mr Candido told the Associated Press news agency. "It was really tragic."

The building where the fire started housed impoverished families, including men and women who worked as vendors in a nearby public market, officials said.

Relatives have identified all the dead, who were placed in black bags and lined up side by side in a clearing near the still-smouldering slum.

An investigation was under way to determine the cause of the fire that started on the ground floor.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8337190.stm>