

Witness Statement of: Ahmad Al Sadi

No. of statement: 2

Exhibits: 1

Date of statement: 31.01.2020

GRENFELL TOWER FIRE PUBLIC INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF AHMAD AL SADI

I, **AHMAD AL SADI**, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement for the purposes of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Fire Public Inquiry. This statement is an account of my experience of fire safety in the Walkways and of dealing with the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation ('TMO') and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council ('RBKC').
2. This statement will also provide a brief factual account of my experience in the aftermath of the fire at Grenfell Tower ('the fire') on 14 June 2017.
3. I provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry dated 2 June 2018 (Unique ID: **IWS00000645**) for the purpose of Phase 1.

Background:

4. I am originally from [REDACTED] and work as a Taxi driver. I first moved in to [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk on 16 August 2016, with my wife Fatima Al Sadi and our four children. Our flat is a three bedroom flat on the ground floor of our building. We have a secure tenancy.
5. RBKC offered us [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk as permanent accommodation; we were pleased with this, as it wasn't too far from our flat in Trellick Tower where we had been living

for a few years. We had formed friendships with our neighbours in the community and moving to Hurstway Walk meant that we would be able to continue these. This was important to our family as a whole but especially for my wife [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6. We wanted to make our flat in Hurstway Walk our home and so spent £10,000 and two months refurbishing it. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Fire Safety

7. I do not recall ever seeing or hearing any fire alarms in the communal area of Hurstway Walk. I also do not recall seeing any fire extinguishers, notices or emergency signs. We were never advised about what to do if there was a fire or about where the emergency exits in our building were. I never took part in an emergency drill and am not aware of any having taken place.
8. Before the 14 June 2017, I never really thought about what I would do if there was a fire in my flat or in our building, I just know that I would have gotten myself and my family out, if not through the front door and main entrance, then through our balcony.
9. Before the fire on 14 June 2017, we had a thick solid front door, which was changed after the fire by the Council; the new doors are very light and flimsy but are supposed to be fire resistant. I recently received a letter from London Fire Solution and Maintenance informing me that they will be coming to change our doors again, they have not explained why they are changing the doors; I can only assume that there is something wrong with the doors installed after the fire.
10. We have a fire alarm in our hallway and in the kitchen, before the fire no one came to check that they were working. They did however come and check the gas annually.

Dealings with the TMO/RBKC

Prior to 14 June 2017

11. Before 14 June 2017, whenever you would call the TMO or RBKC to make a complaint or report an issue, they did not care and would just ignore you.
12. [REDACTED] it was left up to me to call and report issues. As I work, I did not always have the time to keep chasing the TMO to get an issue resolved, so most of the time I had to spend my own time and money repairing things by myself.
13. When we first moved into the flat, we had a lot of trouble with leaks. The water pressure in the bathroom was so low that you could not have a shower; you had to fill up the tub and have a bath. I could not believe that it was the 21st Century in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and we were forced to have baths in the same way that my grandparents did [REDACTED]
14. Not only was it inconvenient to have baths, especially in a family with four young children, but it was also dangerous. Our bathroom is directly above our living room and when the bath was filled, it would leak down into our living room directly on to the ceiling light. I grew tired of chasing the TMO and so eventually I spent my own money and installed a water pressure system in the bathroom. However, because my sons are still very young and cannot have showers, we need to bathe them and when we do; we still get leaks into the living room.
15. Whenever it rains heavily, we get leaks in mine and my wife's bedroom. A neighbour told me that it was because of a structural issue, which meant that the roof of the building was slightly slanted and so the rainwater collects on one side and leaks into flats. I reported the issue to the TMO on several occasions but nothing has ever been done to resolve it.
16. Since moving in to Hurstway Walk, we have had an issue with ventilation in the flat, it has always been very warm and stuffy. Although this is fine during the winter, especially as there is no double-glazing, the flat is too warm during the summer, even with the windows open.

17. We had a serious issue with mice in the flat, which started in February 2017. I reported this to the TMO on many occasions. Although they would send someone to the flat nothing was ever done to resolve the issue. The TMO would come and put down some mice traps, but what they really needed to do was seal the holes where the mice were getting in. I told them that this was what needed to be done but they never listened, because of this we had mice in the flat for over a year.
18. We also had serious security issues, which were not taken seriously by the TMO and RBKC. As our flat is on the ground floor level, our balcony was almost at street level, shortly after we moved in someone tried to break into the flat. I asked the TMO to install railings or a guard outside of the window, especially as we had four young children in the house, but they said that they would not.
19. I attach to this statement as **Exhibit AA/3** a log that was kept by RBKC of the repairs made to my flat. This is not a full log of every call our family made to the TMO. On many occasions after making an initial call to report an issue, I would call back several times to chase them.

After 14 June 2017

20. Following the fire at Grenfell Tower, because we are now dealing with RBKC directly rather than through the TMO, they are responding quicker when you report an issue. If they are not able to send someone out in a reasonable time, it is possible to chase up using the reference number.
21. Although Lancaster West W11 neighbourhood team are responding more quickly than the TMO used to, the quality of the work is still very poor and there are still many issues outstanding.
22. Following the fire, all of the Walkway residents had been told that double-glazed windows would be installed. It is now 2.5 years on and this still has not been done.
23. A temporary boiler was installed in Hurtway Walk after the fire, this is still in use. The water from the temporary boiler is too hot. On one occasion, my daughter burnt her

hand [REDACTED] We have had to supervise our children in the bathroom to make sure that no one else is burnt.

24. Our kitchen was refurbished about 6 months after the fire, whilst we were staying in a hotel. If you look at the kitchen now you would not believe that it was refurbished only 18 months ago.

25. We are still having issues with ventilation and leaks in the flat.

Aftermath

26. I do not feel comfortable going into detail about how my family and I have been affected by the fire on 14 June 2017. What I will say is that, we are devastated and we are all really struggling and we are trying to find a new normal.

27. My wife and children miss the friends they lost in the fire, my son's best-friend Zainab and her mother Nadia. Nadia and my wife were very close, Nadia worked as a Teaching Assistant at our children's Primary School so my wife would see her almost every day when she dropped off or collected the children. My wife would also help look after the children when their class went on school trips, she and Nadia would spend a lot of time together on those trips [REDACTED]

28. As I stated in my Phase 1 statement, my wife was also good friends with Rania Ibrahim, [REDACTED]

29. Fawzia El-Wahabi was the aunt of one of our neighbours in Trellick Tower. She used to visit Trellick Tower often when we lived there, so she and my wife became friends. Fawzia was one of the few people we knew in the community when we first moved into Hurstway Walk.

30. For a long time after the fire, there was very little information about those who were missing. We would hear rumours that someone had died in the Tower but we never had any confirmation. There were a lot of posters up of people's faces, it was difficult to see the posters and know that we might not see them alive again. It was difficult living

in uncertainty, not knowing if our friends had made it out or not. When we finally had confirmation about the deaths, we were heartbroken.

31. Our community has changed so much since the fire. Not only have we lost people from Grenfell Tower, but also many of our neighbours in the Walkway moved away after the fire because they felt that they could not stay in the area after what we witnessed on 14 June 2017.
32. My family and I are lucky; our windows do not look directly on to the Tower so we have some escape from the constant reminder of that night. When I am outside, I still struggle to look at the Tower. Whenever I do, I pray for the people who lost their lives. We chose to remain in the Walkways only because we did not want to disrupt our children's lives any more than we had to. We did not want to take them away from their home. My wife and I could not protect our children from the disruption and changes caused by the fire. Our children have had to deal with a lot and we wanted to offer what stability we could.

Accommodation

33. For three nights after the fire, we stayed in our flat in the Walkways without much contact with anyone else. We were not asked to evacuate and no one came to check on us. I was not able to go to work for those three days because I was in shock. We all slept together in our living room because the children were having nightmares and they were too scared to be alone after what they had witnessed. It felt very weird living in what was basically a graveyard, the burnt skeleton of the Tower and all of the debris was a reminder of that night. A lot of our neighbours had moved out of the Walkways and there were a lot of journalists and people from outside of the community wandering around the area taking pictures of the Tower.
34. On either the second or the third day after the fire, someone from the gas company came to check our meter; they told us not to use our gas but did not tell us why. As we knew that two or three days before the fire, works were being done on gas pipes on Bramley Road, we began to worry that there was going to be an explosion.

35. My wife is very sociable; she has many friends in the community, and she found out from her friends that we could go to the Westway Sports Centre ('the Westway') for information. She went to the Westway for the first time on either Friday 16 or Saturday 17 June 2017; I cannot remember the exact date. A woman called Nur-Al-Huda, who worked for an Islamic charity, assisted her. Nur-Al-Huda informed my wife that we could go to live in a hotel if we did not want to stay in our Walkway flat.
36. Our children had already been through a lot and we did not want to disturb their lives any more than was needed, so we decided to stay in our flat.
37. However, we had a lot of black dust on our balcony from the fire, and as our windows were open on the night of the fire. As the window were open on the night of the fire, we were worried that some dust and debris might have come into our flat as well. We did not want to clean up the debris on the balcony ourselves, as we were worried about what it could be. However, we still had to use the balcony as it was the middle of summer so it was impossible to avoid contact. It was only about 5 months after the fire that RBKC sent someone to clean our balcony. I was not at home at the time but my wife told me that they just used a water pressure system to wash the dust away. No one checked or cleaned inside our flat.
38. For almost a week after the fire, we had no hot water and so we had to go to the Kensington Leisure Centre and Westway to have showers. With four young children, this was very difficult.
39. I went back to work on Saturday 17 June 2017, not because I felt ready to do so, but because I could not afford not to, I had to support my family.
40. We stayed in our flat and tried to live life as normal, we were all still in shock. On the 27 June 2017, a loud alarm went off; the sound was coming from the direction of the Tower. We had previously been told by the police, that a system had been installed to monitor if the Tower shifted. Everyone, ourselves included, who stayed in the area, was anxious about the Tower collapsing. When we heard the alarm go off, we knew that it had to be the monitoring system and thought that the Tower was going to collapse. We also saw the Police Officers running away from the area when the alarm went off, which scared us even more.

41. I was at home at the time the alarm went off, but my wife and children were outside in the local area when they heard it go off. I went outside to join them and to help my wife to try to calm the children. My daughters kept screaming "I don't want to die, I don't want to die" as they believed that the Tower was going to collapse onto the Walkways and because of this, they did not want to come back to our flat or anywhere near it. My whole family was terrified and did not want to go back into our flat, as we didn't believe that it was safe.
42. We went to the Westway and spoke to Nur-Al-Huda. I explained that my family was too scared to go back home and she arranged for us to go to the Grand Park Hotel, Earls Court. We stayed there in two adjoining rooms until the end of July. The rooms were unsuitable, each room only had a one double bed, which meant that my three eldest children ([REDACTED]) had to share a bed and our youngest son [REDACTED] had to sleep in the bed with me and my wife. There was no privacy in the hotel, nowhere for our children to do their homework or play. There were also no cooking facilities, so we ate a lot of take away food which was not good for our health.
43. [REDACTED] but I knew that my family needed to get out of London. I arranged a trip to Germany and Sweden, so the children had something to take their minds of the fire and their grief. We went to Germany on 27 July 2017.
44. I returned to the UK before them on the 15 August 2017, as I had to work. My wife and children stayed in Sweden. As we had given up the hotel room when we went away, I returned to our flat in the Walkways.
45. I remember that a couple of days after I returned I was visited by our new Keyworker, Kat Wood. She wanted to know what decisions we had made about housing. I told her that I would have to leave it to my wife to decide when she was back and that we did not want to move into any kind of temporary accommodation. We would only move to a hotel temporarily or into alternative permanent housing if my wife and kids found it too hard to stay in Hurstway Walk. I did not want to go back to the days when we were not sure about where we would be living and I didn't want to start all over again with a

new house, we had spent so much time and money on our Walkway flat and it had become our home.

46. About two weeks later, my wife called me from Sweden and asked me to go back to help her with the children. She was struggling emotionally having lost so many of her friends and the children were all still having a difficult time, affected by what they had witnessed. My wife did not think she could travel alone with all four. I went to collect them and we travelled back to London as a family. We returned to live in our flat.

47. We thought that enough time had passed for the children to be reassured that the Tower would not collapse and that they would want to go back home, especially as they were struggling with life in cramped hotel rooms. However, it soon became very clear that the children were still struggling with living so close to the Tower. There was still a lot of media attention on the area and pictures of the people who had died were everywhere, it was like a graveyard. We knew that for their sake we could not stay there, so we asked our Keyworker to arrange for us to move to another hotel.

48. We stayed at the Holiday Inn, Fulham from early September 2017 until 4 April 2018. It was a real struggle, the hotel was so tight. We again had to share beds and the children had to travel a long way to go to school and there was nowhere for my eldest daughter to do her homework or for the younger children to play.

49. At the Holiday Inn, we were given £300 a week for food and although the hotel did not provide halal food on their menu, they would order it from somewhere external on request. There were no laundry facilities, so we would have to go to a laundrette to do our washing.

Counselling

50. My whole family were traumatised by the fire. My daughter started wetting herself, which she has never done in her life, and all of the children were having nightmares. My eldest son started chewing his fingernails and still does so to this day.

51. When my wife first went to the Westway on 16 or 17 June 2017, she told Nur-Al-Huda that we were all in shock and struggling and that we were especially concerned for our children. Nur-Al-Huda advised her that we should request counselling from RBKC. When my wife spoke to someone from the Council and explained that our children had lost friends in the fire and were having nightmares, she was told that the children couldn't start counselling straight away. She was told that we would have to wait 4 to 6 weeks to see if the shock wore off, but if nothing changed, they could then start counselling.

52. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I will not go into detail here about the extent of my family's injuries but our family life has been turned upside down.

53. I did not feel that I could go to counselling because I wanted to appear strong for my family, but inside I was really struggling and would pray to god.

54. In October/November 2017, I went to the GP for a routine check-up as I suffer from Asthma and they diagnosed me with diabetes. I truly believe that it is because of the stress of everything that happened. I have not had any support from RBKC.

Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true.

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:



Dated

31/11/2020