

IN THE MATTER OF THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HALIMA DIEJOMAOH**

I, Halima Diejomaoh ( [REDACTED] ) of [REDACTED] make this statement in relation to Phase Two of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. This statement is in addition to my statements previously made to the MPS. I will therefore address the issues relating to Module 3 and 4.

**Fire Safety**

**Fire Safety Systems**

1. I previously lived in Flat 203 Grenfell Walk, W11 1WB. I was a sub-tenant having moved there on 22 October 2016.
2. The flat was a duplex with five bedrooms and I had my own room but shared the kitchen and bathroom. I do not remember there being any issues with the flat door, which was self-closing or if they were fitted with smoke seals or strips however, I can't recall feeling a draft from the front door.
3. There was another set of flats on the floor above us that were accessed through a communal door. I did not have access to this level because they required a separate key to enter.
4. I do not recall being aware of any emergency lighting on Grenfell Walk or seeing any emergency lighting. The streetlights were visible so the area was well lit.
5. I also do not recall there being a smoke alarm in Flat 203, nor near the flat but I remember that some of the other occupants used to smoke in their rooms and I never heard an alarm go off.
6. During the eight months I lived in Grenfell Walk I do not remember anyone raising any safety fire issues with me directly. Neither do I recall anyone carrying out any fire safety checks or inspections during this period.

### **Fire safety advice**

7. I do not recall receiving any advice in relation to fire safety or any such issues being communicated by my landlord from RBKC/TMO prior to the 14 June 2017.
8. I have suffered with asthma all of my life and use an inhaler as and when needed. I could not tolerate the other residents smoking in the flat so I would stay in my room, which provided sufficient barrier to their fumes.

### **Fire safety complaints**

9. I personally did not make any complaints to RBKC/TMO relating to fire safety and I do not know if my landlord raised any complaints. If I had wanted to make a complaint, I don't remember receiving any information either in English or another language informing me to do so.

### **Aftermath**

#### **Emergency Shelter and Accommodation**

10. I escaped from Flat 203 Grenfell Walk around 1am on the 14 June 2017. I was initially advised by the emergency services to go to the Rugby Portobello Club. However, this was not possible as emergency service vehicles and personnel were blocking Grenfell Road. Instead, I was advised to seek shelter at the Latimer Road Methodist Church.
11. I was making my way to the church with my landlord Aziza Boudafcha and upon arrival I was approached by a female volunteer whose name was Deborah; she was in the reception area. She asked us if we were residents and I confirmed we lived in Grenfell Walk. I gave her my full name, address and mobile number and I was given a wristband but before she could provide me with any other information I collapsed. I was assisted to a private room and someone handed me an inhaler but I cannot remember if this was from my bag or if someone else had one. I could not breathe properly,
12. The next thing I remember seeing was a paramedic coming into the room and taking my vitals. I was then put onto a nebuliser to help my breathing before the paramedics wheeled

me in a chair to an ambulance. I remember Aziza providing my personal details to the paramedics, as I was unable to speak however, she did not accompany me to the hospital.

13. I don't know how long I was unconscious but it was not until later on that evening when I became aware of my surroundings that I realised I had been taken to the Royal Free Hospital. I was very distressed and restless and kept asking the medical staff where I was and what was happening. They encouraged me to try to relax and think about my health; I remember becoming very agitated and anxious, as I just wanted someone to tell me what was happening.
14. I remained at the hospital until I discharged myself early on 15 June 2017. I wanted to know what had happened in the fire and if the people I knew were well. I called a cab to take me back to the Methodist church and when I arrived, I again saw Deborah from the previous day. She told me that the council were allocating hotel rooms to the residents of the tower and walkway. I called Aziza and she advised me that we had been allocated two rooms at the Holiday Inn in Earls Court, which also included her children. I remember thinking there would not be enough space for all of us as Aziza had 3 children. She said that the council advised her that they could not provide additional rooms for her children, as they were too young to be in a room on their own.
15. We decided that I would share one room with Aziza's eldest daughter, [REDACTED] and she would stay with her two youngest. However, I actually ended up staying in one of the rooms by myself. I remember thinking that this hotel was far away from Grenfell Tower.
16. I had not changed my clothes since leaving the flat so Deborah suggested we go to The Westway to look for a change of clothes, as people in the community and wider had generously donated. All my belongings were in my flat. I could not find any clothes suitable as they were too small so another volunteer suggested I try the Al Manaar Mosque for something more suitable.
17. As I was on my way to the mosque I suffered another asthma attack. I realised that I had been struggling to breathe since I had left the hospital but I tried not to focus too much on that. Fortunately, there was an ambulance nearby and I was transported to Charing Cross Hospital where I was again treated for my asthma. I stayed in hospital for 3 days before I



discharged myself.

18. After I left the hospital, I made my way by cab to The Westway centre. I called Aziza and she agreed to meet me so she could give me my hotel room key and we ended up travelling to the hotel together. Upon our arrival I made my way to my room but again I felt very ill and I remember calling the emergency services before I collapsed. I was again taken by ambulance to hospital, this time St Mary's in Paddington where I stayed for approximately 5 days before I discharged myself again. I would state that no one from RBKC/TMO made any direct contact with me whilst I was an inpatient at any of the hospitals where I received treatment.
19. As stated above when I was at The Westway, before going to the hotel, I remember one of the volunteers informed us that the council was providing a one-off payment of £250 to single residents and £500 for families to assist with any emergencies. I approached one of the many 'stations' set up to deliver help and I spoke to someone from RBKC. I gave them my details and I was handed an envelope. A short time later Aziza arrived and I informed her of the emergency funds.
20. I managed to obtain two outfits at The Westway, which I was grateful for as I had been in the same clothes for over a week; and toiletries. I then called a cab but it did not arrive so we drove back to the hotel in Aziza's car. Throughout the journey I felt uneasy because Aziza continually mentioned not receiving an envelope. I was feeling so weak and exhausted I just took the one out of my bag and gave it to her. I did not keep any of the money.
21. Aziza gave me the key for my room and I went straight to bed as I was exhausted. Later that day when I woke up I noticed there were items from Grenfell Walk in my room. I called Aziza and she confirmed she had returned to Grenfell Walk to collect some items but she did not bring any items from my room.
22. The following day I called a cab and went to The Westway to look through the donations to see what I needed. I returned to the hotel but I could not open the door, as there appeared to be a problem with the key card. I asked at the reception and they told me to speak to Aziza, as it was her name on the booking at the hotel. Unfortunately, I could not find her and ended

up waiting for over five hours for her to return. She told me I should go and stay with a family member or friends until she could sort something out.

23. As it was very late, I decided to stay the night and the next morning I went back to The Westway and they advised that I was entitled to hotel accommodation in my own right so one of the volunteers/staff working for RBKC contacted the Hilton Hotel on Holland Park Avenue. However, they did not offer to arrange transport so I had to order a cab to get there and pay for it myself. I stayed at the Hilton Hotel for over one year. RBKC then offered me permanent accommodation and I moved into that flat in October 2018.
24. It was not until August 2017 that I was contacted by RBKC to confirm they had assigned a keyworker, called Margaret, and she made contact with me the next day. She was very helpful but RBKC gave me a new keyworker after one year as she was from Westminster and they wanted me to have someone from RBKC. I have had four key workers to date.

### **Food and Drink**

25. I was aware that the Muslim community, not RBKC, provided food for those observing Ramadan. I am unable to make any further comment on the provision of food and drink in the immediate aftermath as I was in and out of hospital during this period.

### **Basic Provisions and Financial Assistance**

26. I was only aware of financial assistance on my second visit to the Westway centre, however as stated I did not benefit from this as I handed over the proceeds to Aziza. The next offer of financial assistance was my food allowance from RBKC, which I did not receive until a month after moving into the Hilton hotel.

### **Psychological Support**

27. During all of my hospital stays I was not offered any psychological support and no one from the council visited or contacted me. I felt that I had to support myself and just try to cope even though I felt so unwell and overwhelmed.

28. I was at the Hilton hotel for six months before I was able to access any psychological support. A psychologist at St Charles hospital saw me once a week. I think this delay contributed to the flashbacks I continue to experience on a regular basis.

29. I am currently under the care of RBKC's rehabilitation scheme however, I am still awaiting funding approval for the recommended psychological treatment identified.

### **Information and Assistance**

30. As I was mostly in the hospital during the first week after the fire, I was not in a position to enquire about the missing/deceased until some two or three weeks later. However, when I did attend The Westway I did ask about certain people but the volunteers only told me that a lot of people were still in hospital and they could not confirm any details.

31. I do not feel the council provided enough information about the emergency services that were available. Only through word of mouth and by luck was I made aware of assistance at the Rugby Portobello Club, Latimer Road Methodist Church, Al Manaar Mosque and The Westway.

### **Needs of Specific Groups**

32. I was initially directed to The Westway for clothing however, I did not initially find anything suitable to wear. I found clothing that was more suitable when I attended the Al Manaar Mosque but I could not find anything in my size. Thankfully, one of the volunteers advised me that the Zakat Foundation could assist me. They gave me £300 to buy new clothes and obtained a nebuliser for my asthma.

### **Voluntary and Community Groups**

33. I was only able to fully access these groups after the council provided me with a keyworker.



### Coordination and Leadership

34. I do not recall any coordination by Central Government in the immediate aftermath. There appeared to be confusion on the night regarding where to go for emergency relief and I do not remember having any contact with the TMO or anyone from the council approaching me.

### Adequacy of Response and Lessons learned

35. What happened in the early hours of the 14 June 2017 was so unexpected and unprecedented. I could not have imagined those events in my wildest dreams. I believe that the emergency services were slow to react and their actions were inadequate; it was as if people just wanted to hang around and look at what was taking place as opposed to actually helping.
36. There were a lot of volunteers but I felt that I was treated differently as if I was not part of the Grenfell community. It was like there was a 'take care of their own' policy. I felt that I had no choice but to rely on my former landlord for information and what services were being offered, which was not always forthcoming. I knew that I had not fully recovered from recent events and should probably not have discharged myself from hospital before I had fully recovered. However, I felt that I had no choice but to put my health at risk in order to know what was happening and where to go.
37. I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

I believe the contents of this witness statement to be true.

Signed  .....

Date. 11/02/2020 .....

**HALIMA DIEJOMAOH**