

Witness Statement of: Giuseppe Razza
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GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

PHASE 2 WITNESS STATEMENT OF GIUSEPPE RAZZA

This statement is a factual statement prepared for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dealing with modules 3 and 4 in Phase 2 only. It does not, and is not intended to set out my experiences on the night of the fire, or the impact that these events and the aftermath have had on me (and my family).

Signed



I, **GIUSEPPE RAZZA**, will say as follows:

1. This is my first statement and relates to Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. This statement is my account of the fire safety in Barandon Walk, and of my experience during the aftermath of the fire.

Background

2. I first moved into the Walkways with my wife on 30 November 1998. We initially lived at [REDACTED] Barandon Walk with my wife. Flat [REDACTED] was a 1-bedroom flat and so when my wife and I had two children not long after we moved in, it became very cramped. We contacted the RBKC ('the Council') to tell them but they said that we were not entitled to an additional room while the two children were under 10 years old.
3. There were various problems with Flat [REDACTED] while we lived there. The two water tanks in the flat were about to burst and there was lots of mould. There were several

occasions when we were without hot water, including two periods each of which nearly a month long. During those periods we had to boil water for showers. The Tenant Management Organisation ('TMO') were very bad at sorting it out. We had a lot of contact with them, but they just ignored us most of the time. They failed to come to appointments and so on.

4. In May 2007, my family moved into flat [REDACTED] This was in an extremely poor state when we moved in and we spent £23,000 refurbishing it. I later purchased the property and became a leaseholder.
5. I always found dealing with the TMO to be incredibly frustrating. They paid very little attention to their tenants and the service they provided was awful. I was paying service charges, but it was difficult to see what service I was being provided with. It was extremely frustrating. There was often a pile up of rubbish left near the main entrance, which was not managed at all by TMO, which would have caused a fire and health and safety hazard. I did many times bring it to the TMO's attention and nothing was done. Also, I filled in the online anti-social behaviour form on two instances. I got a phone call from the Area Manager at that time and all I was told, was "sorry we cannot do much about it apart from sending letters to residents asking not to leave rubbish on the floor".

Module 3 Issues

6. In this section, I will address the issues that are relevant to Module 3 of Phase 2, specifically the issues of fire safety within the Walkways.

Fire safety systems

Flat doors

7. My front door to flat [REDACTED] was not a certified fire door. It was a standard wooden door with a glass window in the middle. The doors that the TMO provided before the fire were very unsafe, as they were thin and flimsy. They only provided one deadlock, which was not enough.
8. The new flat doors on the other flats are still not fire-proof. They changed the bottom of the doors so there is a gap between the floor and the door, so I don't think these will perform well in a fire.

Communal doors

9. I cannot recall any notable details regarding the communal doors.
10. The door entry system often did not work. It was always open, which was a real security concern. The intercom system was broken as well. I do not think that they ever maintained it.

Fire safety signage

11. I cannot recall any fire safety signage in the communal areas of Barandon Walk.

Emergency Lighting

12. I cannot recall the emergency lighting in Barandon Walk. There has always been tube lighting, but I am not sure if these work as emergency lights.

Smoke alarms

13. I remember that before the fire, sometime around 2016, they installed smoke detectors in the flats and carbon monoxide detectors. However, there were no fire or smoke detectors in the communal areas.

Fire safety checks & inspections

14. Whilst I was a tenant in Barandon Walk, my flat was checked annually for gas issues. I cannot recall any other regular checks in my flat, such as smoke detectors. I cannot recall any checks or inspections, or fire marshals in the communal areas of Barandon Walk in the entire time I have lived here.

Fire safety advice

15. I cannot recall ever receiving any fire safety advice. I have always assumed that the correct course of action in the event of a fire is to try to raise the alarm, and then try to put the fire out or run. I have never been made aware of the 'stay put' advice, nor have I ever been given official guidance by the TMO or RBKC.
16. I was visited by the LFB in 2012, after I received a flyer from them. I called an arranged an apartment visit. They told me that I did not have enough sockets in my flat, and that there were too many extension cables. The council then contacted me and installed extra sockets in my home.

Fire safety complaints

17. I made multiple complaints to the TMO, specifically to Mr. Page, Ms. Rumble & Ms. Bartholomew, who were all Neighbourhood Managers. With the exception of Ms. Rumble, I found that they did not take responsibility and did not action my complaints. The majority of complaints were made over the phone and by email.

18. A few feet from the main door to the 400s and 500s section of Barandon Walk, is the rubbish chute. As I mentioned above, there were often a pile-ups of rubbish there, especially on weekends. This was a fire hazard and very unpleasant to look at, and I made multiple complaints regarding this to the TMO. The TMO should have resolved the issue, maybe by providing a place for larger items that were being thrown out, the communal areas should also have been better maintained. No matter what I said, or who I complained to, no one would help or clean it. It was only cleaned on Monday morning, and then for the rest of the week it built up again.

19. I cannot recall making any other complaints concerning fire issues.

Module 4 issues

20. In this section, I will be addressing the issues relevant to Module 4 of Phase 2, aftermath.

Emergency shelter and accommodation

21. I was at work when I heard about the fire. I returned as quickly as I could, and thankfully heard from my wife via a phone call that my family was fine and they were in St Clements Church. They had been awoken by neighbours shouting that there was a fire at Grenfell Tower. They were not evacuated by any form of official.

22. My church, Kensington Temple, contacted me and organised accommodation for myself and my family on the night, so we did not need any accommodation to be provided by the council. A representative of the Council did offer accommodation at St Clements but they were dealing with a large number of families and seemed overwhelmed. The situation seemed uncertain, but as my church was only helping a few families, rather than hundreds, it seemed sensible to accept help from them

23. We returned to our home the next day. We were told that we would only be allowed

in to pick up our possessions, but as we were doing so, we were told we could stay. I was told this by my neighbour initially, and I confirmed this with the police. Our block is the furthest from the Tower so this seemed sensible. However, the flat had gas but no hot water, meaning we had to shower at the leisure centre, although we had access at any time of the day, it was obviously inconvenient as we could not just have a shower in our own flat. We heard about the shower at the gym through neighbours, rather than it being advertised by the council. The hot water in my flat was not restored until the beginning of August.

24. The Council offered to let us stay in a hotel. However, as I needed to carry on working, I did not have the time or energy to move.

25. A lot of black dust from the fire fell onto my balcony. There was no debris as the balcony faced away from the Tower. The Council offered to clean it a couple of weeks after the fire but as far as I was concerned it was just dust, and so I cleaned the balcony with my wife. The veranda was closed but some dust stained our nice curtains. The Council sent the cleaners that normally clean the block to come and collect our very expensive curtains to be cleaned. This was very unprofessional, and I was concerned in giving my curtains to them because they were not a professional cleaning company. When the curtains were returned, they looked like they had never been cleaned. I decided to clean them myself by taking them to the drycleaners.

26. Recently, I attended an NHS health check-up at the Harrow Club. It was a basic check on my blood pressure etc. The real reason I wanted the check-up was to test my lungs but the relevant machine was in another place. They said I could book an appointment elsewhere but I was disappointed in the service offered. I am very concerned about my lungs and I worry about what I breathed in during the fire.

Food and drink

27. I did not take much food or drink from the centres, as we did not need it.

Basic provisions and financial assistance

28. I collected a £5000 a one-off payment for residents from the Westway in the first 2 weeks after the fire. I contacted the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) and checked that I would not be legally compromising myself by accepting, which the CAB confirmed.
29. The payment was a way for the Council to recognise that they made a grievous error and I believe it was made to try to smooth things over. It helped people in need at the time and it was a positive thing that they did, but it felt like it was done for negative reasons. The money seemed to be to keep people happy and to stop them complaining. I think that it feels this way because of the distrust I have for the Council and the TMO after 20 years of living on the Lancaster West Estate.
30. The Westway was decently organised. I did not need to use many services, which were split up across separate sections of the hall, but to me they seemed to be set up well. I had to queue to enter before I was registered, but that is to be expected. As far as I can recall, there was no method of prioritisation, and I queued with Tower residents and Walkway residents alike.
31. We took a few pieces of clothing each, socks and other clothes to wear on the night as we did not know when we were able to go back to our home. We got these from St Clements Church. The clothes were really useful for the night.

Psychological support

32. Personally, I did not seek any psychological support. My family however was affected quite severely – my daughter and my wife were traumatised and distressed for two weeks after the fire. They would only sleep with normal daytime clothes on for a few weeks. This was because they wanted to be ready to leave the flat quickly if there was another fire.
33. My wife fared slightly better than our children but was still extremely stressed. We prepared in case of another incident, with an emergency bag at the ready, we found it difficult to relax fully and settle down.
34. We avoided counselling, and dealt with these issues within the family. Our Christian faith helped us through the period, and helped us deal with the trauma.

Information and assistance

35. I did not have close personal ties with any of the deceased. A lot were friends of friends. Therefore, I did not have any experience trying to obtain information about missing persons and the deceased.

Public communication

36. I heard about services and support in the immediate aftermath almost entirely through word of mouth. It was very chaotic at the time; everything was up in the air. I would overhear other people's conversations or would just hear from friends about important information, such as the availability of the £5000.
37. I had several visits from the Council, although the first of these was a few months after the fire, around September. I cannot recall specifically what we discussed, but it was likely the various services being provided by the Council, and general updates on the situation. While these meetings were useful, they came too late to be particularly beneficial.
38. I am not particularly active on social media and did not receive information through this medium.
39. I found out about counselling and support from the NHS via leaflets and flyers, which came to my home. I received many leaflets, but I would say that they were not too useful for me personally, as I continued to live in the Walks and was able to find out things through word of mouth.
40. I was not offered a key worker. In the immediate aftermath I did not even know that a key worker was an option, and so I did not ask for one.

Voluntary and community groups

41. The support that came from all of the charities and community groups was

overwhelming. It was more than enough and it was great to see. They provided a lot of food and water, provisions, places to stay during the night and more.

Coordination and leadership

42. During the immediate aftermath of the fire, I never saw anyone from the TMO. They were invisible. Whilst I was in St Clement's Church on 14 June 2017, I heard about the accommodation being offered, as an RBKC representative had addressed the church before I had arrived. Although I did not see representatives of the TMO or the Council often, and they did not contact me specifically during the aftermath, I knew that I could attend the Westway if I needed assistance or services from them.

43. I heard from my neighbours that some of them had trouble with the accommodation provided by the council. For instance, the accommodation may have been too far from their children's school, or was otherwise unsuitable for them.

Adequacy of response and lessons learned

44. Overall, and based on my personal experience, I thought that RBKC did an ok job in the aftermath. In these tragic emergencies, you cannot get everything right and what they did do seemed to help people. The combination of RBKC's effort and the help provided by community groups, charities, and volunteers was enough to look after people, in spite of the chaos.

45. I think that to move on, people need to put the past behind them. The government promised 21st century accommodation to Lancaster West Estate, and today they are forgetting that promise. They received a 'great book of ideas' from residents, and they are not implementing these. It is a waste. When they make these ideas a reality, people can then move on with their lives.

46. This statement is only the tip of the iceberg. The entirety of the 2 years has been chaos and I have felt very vulnerable. What has gone on deep within my mind, and in the minds of my family, is much deeper than words can describe. I am a practical person and do not want to cry or shout about what has happened, but it has affected my family and me deeply. Ultimately, my main feeling is disappointment - I am unsure anything has changed.

47. I know that Lancaster West Estate is not going to get a 21st century model estate as it was promised by RBKC and the Prime Minister at the time, Theresa May. Ultimately, once again RBKC is looking at cutting costs and paying attention to saving money rather than genuinely and sincerely giving back dignity to all residents of Lancaster West, following decades of neglect.

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:



Date:



Giuseppe Razza