

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

PHASE 2 WITNESS STATEMENT OF MELANIE URBANO

I, Melanie Urbano, born [REDACTED] previously of Flat 176, 20th floor, Grenfell Tower, Grenfell Road, London, W11 1TQ, WILL SAY as follows:

Background

1. I lived in Grenfell Tower in Flat 176 with my mother Adriana Ramirez, father Ramiro Urbano and sister Jessica Urbano Ramirez. Flat 176 was originally on the 17th floor, which became the 20th floor when the floors were re-numbered in the refurbishment.
2. My mother Adriana Ramirez has given a statement to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dated 5 October 2018 (Inquiry reference IWS00001116). My father Ramiro Urbano has given two statements to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dated 10 May 2018 (Inquiry reference IWS00000496) and 4 December 2018 (Inquiry reference IWS00001207). I agree with how they have described our flat and the problems we had with the refurbishment.
3. I have given a witness statement to the Metropolitan Police Service dated 1 November 2017 (which I will refer to as my MPS Statement). I consent to this being disclosed to the Inquiry for use in evidence.
4. I did not give a statement in Phase 1 of the Inquiry, as I did not feel able to recount my experience of the night of the fire. I am now giving a statement for Phase 2, to add to my parents' recollection of our flat and to add my experience of the aftermath.

Fire safety systems

5. I described the front door of our flat in page 5 of my MPS Statement.
6. The door to the staircase on our floor was heavy and it shut automatically. The door to the refuse chute on our floor was also heavy and shut automatically as well.
7. I described the staircase and floor numbering on page 2 of my MPS Statement.
8. As stated on page 5 of my MPS Statement, I don't remember seeing any fire safety signs around the building.

9. I described the smoke alarm in our flat on page 5 of my MPS Statement.
10. As stated on page 5 of my MPS Statement, there were no break glass fire alarms, fire extinguishers or fire prevention aids in the building.

Fire safety advice

11. As stated on page 5 of my MPS Statement, I was not aware of a 'stay put' strategy before 14 June 2017. I don't remember receiving any advice or communication about fire safety in the building.

Emergency shelter and accommodation

12. I described going to the Harrow Club on page 4 of my MPS Statement. It was a space where we could sit down and get water and some food.
13. The Westway Centre was really busy and had loads of mattresses and clothes. I got an oyster card there which I could use for a few weeks. I took some clothes there as well, but mainly it was my friends who gave me clothes and things. My mum's boss got us things as well.
14. The first night after the fire I stayed at a friend's place. Then RBKC allocated us a room at the Holiday Inn. It was one room for all of us – my mum, dad, and me – so I stayed in that room for a few days while my parents stayed with other family. Then RBKC gave my mum a separate room, but in a different hotel, though we needed to be near each other. My mum's boss's PA was helping us and she asked RBKC to get us rooms in the same hotel. From around a week after the fire, our family had rooms in the same hotel.
15. My mum's boss's PA kept in contact with RBKC for us. We got temporary accommodation in a flat a few weeks after the fire but we never properly moved in because the flat needed a lot of repairs done. I got permanent re-housing from early November 2017.

Food and drink

16. We were having the hotel's food for a while, and unfortunately it was quite bad food and the same every day. Eventually we found out that we could buy food outside the hotel and get reimbursed, so we started doing that instead.

Basic provisions and financial assistance

17. We received charitable money and got transfers by giving bank details at the Rugby Portobello Club. My bank also gave me a financial donation.
18. I don't remember receiving any financial assistance from RBKC in the early days after the fire, but I have seen an email chain between my mum's boss's family and RBKC which seems to confirm that RBKC gave me financial assistance on 19 June 2017 (Inquiry reference RBK00011799). It was a very difficult and confusing time, as we were focused on trying to find Jessica and many people were trying to help us.

Psychological support

19. I remember getting letters about counselling through the hotel. From what I read in the letters, you had to go to Latimer Road and line up for counselling, and I didn't want to do that.
20. I didn't have a keyworker for a while, and I went through my mum's keyworker if I had any questions. I have a separate keyworker now, but I have not really asked for anything.

Information and assistance

21. My family and I went to all the hospitals in London, looking for Jessica. The hospitals were as helpful as they could be. We gave them Jessica's photo and name and they looked in the wards.
22. We had Family Liaison Officers about a week after the fire, but they weren't able to tell us anything about Jessica. We had no contact with the Casualty Bureau.
23. No one knew anything about Jessica. No one helped. We printed posters with her photo and did it all ourselves.

Public communication

24. We received leaflets at the hotel and that was the main way we got information.

Voluntary and community groups

25. There were lots of people offering help. I didn't get the names of the charities, except the Red Cross.

Coordination and leadership

26. I did not see any leadership or coordination by the central government, RBKC or TMO in the immediate aftermath.
27. I understand that this statement will form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and will be published on the Inquiry's website in due course.

I believe that the contents of this witness statement are true.

Signed:.....*Melanie Urbano*.....

Dated:.....*25/02/20*.....

Melanie Urbano