

Witness Statement of: Mouna El Ogbani
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GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MOUNA EL OGBANI

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, **MOUNA EL OGBANI**, will say as follows:

1. I was a resident of Flat 85 Grenfell Tower. I lived there with my husband, two daughters and son. We are survivors of the fire, which started in the early hours on 14 June 2017. I am making this statement for the purposes of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry.
2. I made a statement in Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry (reference IWS00000844), dated 15 May 2018. I also made four statements to the Metropolitan Police Service on 27 June 2017, 28 June 2017, 17 November 2017 and 27 March 2019.
3. This statement addresses the issues within module 3 (fire safety within the Tower and communication with residents) and module 4 (aftermath) from the Inquiry's stated Phase 2 schedule. I deal with issues relating to module 3 in paragraphs 4 to 24, and module 4 in paragraphs 25 to 99 of this statement. This statement should be read alongside by Phase 1 witness statement, which also covers issues relating to modules 3 and 4.

Module 3

Living in Grenfell Tower

4. I cover the grant of my tenancy at Grenfell Tower at paragraph 3 of my Phase 1 statement. This was a secure council tenancy in my name. When we went to sign the tenancy agreement I remember we were given a tenants handbook, which contained fire safety information, but I do not recall anything in the handbook about a 'stay put' policy.
5. I have strong connections to the local area around Grenfell Tower. As I state at paragraph 3 of my Phase 1 statement, I have lived in Grenfell Tower since 15 March 2006 and I grew up in the local area around Grenfell Tower. I used to live with my parents in Testerton Walk from 1990, and they continued to live there after I moved out. We are a close family and I used to see them regularly and support them while I was living in Grenfell Tower.

Repairs

6. While living in Grenfell Tower, if we needed to report a problem to the TMO we would call the TMO repairs line or go downstairs to the estate office.
7. I recall one occasion in July 2016 when our kitchen cupboard fell out. I was cooking and it just fell off the wall. It gave me a shock, when it crashed to the ground it was such a loud noise; like a bomb exploding. I called the TMO to report this. They took about three or four days to come and sort it out. On the whole, the TMO would avoid doing repairs if they could. When you called them with any repair issues, they would tell you what to do yourself rather than come out to fix the problem. Then they would delay coming to see you and then their work would often be substandard when they did eventually come. When they came to sort out the cupboard they just put up a cupboard that did not match with the rest of the kitchen. The TMO was typically indifferent and unresponsive and we would usually rely on my husband who is a handyman to fix things in the flat.
8. The lifts were frequently out of service. This was almost always on Friday evenings, and then they would not be fixed until the following Monday. Luckily, I have my mum living in Testerton Walk nearby so I could avoid having to take the stairs if I wished,

but others who were disabled were not able to get out of the building or up the stairs while the lifts were out of service.

The Refurbishment

9. I state at paragraph 7 of my Phase 1 statement that we were not consulted about the refurbishment beforehand. To clarify, the TMO did hold a meeting with residents to let them know what was going to happen during the refurbishment but I do not recall having any say as to what work was to be done on the tower. We and other residents were not happy with the proposed changes to the building and confirmed at that meeting that we did not agree with what was proposed. Resident's meetings were organised which Youssef would attend and then report back to me.
10. The main problem for us was the changes the council wanted to make to the boilers inside our flats. We were opposed to the gas meter being fitted to the front of our flat by the door, as this would make the corridor narrower. We also did not agree with the ceiling being lowered and an extra cupboard being added to the communal area, making it smaller and shorter. With other residents we agreed that we would not let workmen into our flat to move the boiler.
11. We were sent letters telling us that workers were going to come to our flat but when they did come we refused to let them in. Following this, the TMO sent their Housing officer, Jan Jones, to come and see us. She went through our tenancy agreement with us and told us that we could not deny the workers access to our flat. I feel that the TMO should have been more collaborative and less threatening in their approach to us.
12. We were not told anything about the installation of external cladding to the building. After the refurbishment, I presumed that they changed the exterior of the Tower because of the school next to the Tower, and they wanted the Tower to look good next to the school.
13. I cover the works that were completed in my flat and outside as part of the refurbishment at paragraphs 10 to 12 of my Phase 1 statement. One of the changes made was to replace the windows and the window frames inside our flat. All the curtains were removed while this happened, which meant there was no privacy in our flat while the works were

ongoing. Workers working on the external face of the tower could see into our flat and it could feel quite intrusive.

14. The works also included the installation of pipes in the corridor. I also recall that they started to drill holes above our front door for gas pipes without giving us any warning or indication that they were going to do this.
15. As part of the refurbishment, the TMO changed our front doors, we were permitted to choose a style. These doors were very light and were not sealed. The only front doors that I thought did not change were those of leaseholder in the tower.
16. While the refurbishment was happening, the works would always start at 8am. It was three years of noise and lifts busy with workmen. I had no contact with Rydon while the refurbishment was ongoing. I remember hearing their name, but I was not aware of their role at the time.
17. Following the refurbishment, we would experience issues with the HIU units that controlled the hot water in our flat. We also had problems with gaps around our windows following the installation of new windows. We noticed this in December 2016. The windows let in a draught which made the living room and bedrooms colder. I reported this to the TMO and they did sort it out but I cannot remember exactly when or how.
18. At one point during the refurbishment there was a leak into our flat from a hole in a pipe in the bathroom in the flat above us. We reported the leak to the TMO but it took time for them to come and fix the leak, and paint over the ceiling. This was during the refurbishment but I am not sure that the issue was related to the refurbishment.

Communal area

19. At paragraph 9 of my Phase 1 statement, I state that the fire doors in the communal area were always shut. By this I mean that they would automatically close. They were heavy doors.

20. I also stated at paragraph 13 that the floor numbers in the stairwell were removed from the walls when the lights were put up. They were painted over and the were replaced with small stickers. This meant it was harder to tell when using the stairs which floor you were on. Also all the floor numbers changed. Our floor changed from the 8th to the 11th floor. Next to the lifts on each floor there were also stickers to say what floor you were on.
21. The lights in the communal lobby sometimes didn't work. The vents in the communal lobby seemed to be on all the time, you could hear them. In the corridor in the communal area they added another cupboard between the fire exit door and the rubbish chute door, for pipes. It made the communal area smaller.

Fire Safety

22. At paragraphs 4 and 5 of my Phase 1 statement I refer to a fire that took place on the 5th floor of Grenfell Tower several years ago. I believe this was around 2014 or 2015.
23. I state at paragraph 9 of my Phase 1 statement that I was not given any fire safety information. I did see a notice next to the lifts which said you should not use the them in the event of a fire. That was all. I was not aware of the existence of a 'stay put' policy at the time. I always thought that I would want to try get out of the Tower in the event of a fire.
24. Before the academy was built, the Tower was surrounded by football pitches and a car park. It was more open and it would have been easier for fire engines to access. Sometimes other residents would park their cars outside the tower. I thought this might be a fire safety issue in case they prevented fire engines from getting close to the tower. I did not raise these concerns with TMO at the time.

Module 4

14th June 2017

25. I cover my family's evacuation from the Tower at paragraphs 15 to 32 of my Phase 1 statement, and don't repeat that detail in this statement.

26. I cover hearing about and going to Rugby Portobello club in the morning on 14 June 2017 at Paragraphs 33 to 36 of my Phase 1 statement. At around 6am, I spoke to my friend's neighbour who told me that we could go to the Rugby Portobello club for help. No one from RBKC contacted us in the morning. I was familiar with Rugby Portobello as I taken my children there for English and Maths lessons. We arrived at the club at around 10am, the door was open and we went downstairs into the big hall. I cannot remember if there was anyone checking people entering and leaving the club. I remember seeing the rugby club's staff members there, although I did not know them by name. I do not remember seeing the Police there at this point. There may have been people from RBKC at the Rugby Club, but they were not identifiable, they did not have badges on.
27. We wrote down our names and our children's names on a board up on the wall with our flat number. The board was not organised in any particular way. Anyone could write down their name as a survivor.
28. We were at the Rugby Club for over 12 hours that day. We spent a lot of time waiting around. There was a lot of people coming and going from the club. While we didn't see anyone from the council or the TMO there, my children's head of year came to see me and other families who had survived. There were also journalists there who were trying to get hold of our contact details. We felt harassed by the media there who wanted us to give interviews.
29. The Police arrived at some point and asked me if I had any pictures or videos which I could forward to them. They were checking details of those who had survived and appeared to be gathering evidence. They did not appear to have been tasked with providing information as to what we should do or where we should go.
30. It was also the staff at the Rugby Club who gathered us together, and explained where we would be staying. There was around four staff members who called people into an office. They took details of your name and how many were in your family. They would then organise which hotel you were going to and arrange for a taxi to take you to the hotel. I do not know where they were getting their information from to allocate people to hotels.

31. My mother, brother and his wife and their baby were also with us at the Rugby Portobello club. They lived in Testerton Walk and had been evacuated from their home. We all stayed together in the club and were allocated the same hotel.
32. We were eventually told that we would be going to the Premier Inn Hotel in Earl's Court. We all waited about three or four hours to be taken to the hotel. The staff at the Rugby Club arranged for taxis to take us there. We had Iftar at around 9pm at the Rugby Portobello. The Rugby Portobello staff spoke to the hotel staff about arranging food for us when we arrived. It was just before midnight by the time we arrived at the hotel and the kitchen had closed but the hotel provided us with food when we got there, as arranged by the Rugby Portobello staff. When we arrived were not told how long we would be staying at the hotel for or what would happen next.
33. The survivors were spread out in different hotels, some were in the Premier Inn in Earl's Court, others were in the Copthorne Tara Hotel next to High Street Kensington. It felt like we were a long distance from the Tower and we were worried that we would be less likely to receive information updates and support.

Relief centres

Rugby Portobello club

34. On the 15 June 2017, we all went back to Rugby Portobello. My eldest son stayed with his friends after the fire to stay away from the uncertainty and the drama of the immediate aftermath. He came to stay with us at the weekend. When we got back to the area, it was chaos. The roads were closed and there was people and traffic everywhere. You could see the Tower and the fire was still going in the middle part of the Tower. It was so upsetting, it was unbearable to be there. We knew that a lot of people were missing, we didn't hear any news about the Wahabi family and the Yaya family. There was a lot of talk about Jessica Urbano.
35. No one from the authorities came to explain why the fire had happened or whether it was being investigated or what was being done to locate survivors and or what we were supposed to do. At Rugby Portobello they would let us in when we wanted to be there. They recognised us because we spent much of the first day and evening there. We would

still give them our name at the door before they let us in. They were still journalists at the club on the second day.

36. Rugby Portobello was just welcoming survivors. The Police were there again to take statements from people and continue with collecting evidence. They didn't tell us where to go or give us information about what had happened to people. They said if you want to find out you have to go and write down your name and those that are missing at the Westway. I found out about the Westway at the Rugby Portobello through word of mouth. Again I did not see anyone from the TMO or RBKC at Rugby Portobello.

37. I state at paragraph 37 of my Phase 1 statement, that my family received a lot of help from the Rugby Portobello in the aftermath of the fire. It was really important to us at that time as we were displaced and felt very lost.

Westway

38. For the first seven days, I spent most of the day between the Westway and the Rugby Portobello. My feet were so tired. We went to the relief centres because we were hoping to get information. Our immediate priority was to get information on our housing situation.

39. The 15 June 2017 was the first day we went to the Westway. There were tables outside and you would have to queue up and give you details in order to be permitted entry. The British Red Cross were on the door, and they would give you a wristband for identity. They let me in because I was a tower resident even though I couldn't prove this because I didn't have any documents on me, but they just believed me. The wristband would change each time you went. The colour of the wristband identified me as a survivor.

40. The Red Cross volunteers there were helpful. They had the Westway staff and other people there, including volunteers. There was a reception area and food and clothes inside. We received clothes, food and toiletries at the Westway.

41. Most official organisations were at the Westway. They had the Zakat foundation, Transport for London, the Department for Work & Pensions for child tax credits, the

RBKC housing team, the NHS and the Police. We went to the Home Office desk for our replacement passports. We were told to go to our local pharmacy to get our pictures done for the replacement passports. I was given a letter for my GP explaining our situation. We took this to our GP to get a print out of all our children's immunisations. We had to go to Westminster for our birth certificates because my children were born in Paddington.

42. There was a housing officer at the Westway every day, and I would go to see if there were any updates on us being rehoused. They would tell me each day that there was no update and that they were still waiting. I also spoke to one of the Housing Ministers, Alok Sharma, who promised me that our housing would be sorted out in three days' time but of course that did not happen.
43. During Ramadan, we went to the Westway to break our fast. They organised iftar for everyone who wanted to join in at the Westway. Ramadan finished two weeks after the fire, after this I stopped going to the Westway.

Other relief centres

44. I state at Paragraph 40 of my Phase 1 statement that I received support from the Al Manaar Cultural Heritage Centre. We received support from Al Manaar on the day of the fire and the week afterwards. There was halal food, tea and coffee there. They also provided massage therapy and they gave us toys for the children to replace some of what they lost. I was invited to meet Prince William there. We also visited the Latimer Christian Centre, opposite the Westway for support.
45. Overall, the help provided to us in the aftermath of the fire was mainly through voluntary organisations or from individuals in the community rather than central government or RBKC. The group of people who were usually in the area, on hand to help, were Youssef, Loubna and Shareen.

Emergency accommodation

Staying at the Premier Inn

46. When we arrived at the Premier Inn we were given two rooms next to each other on the 4th floor, one for my two children who were 13 and 10 at the time and one for Youssef,

myself and my 2 year old daughter. I requested a small bed for my daughter. My mum was given a room below ours. We stayed in the same room for the duration of our stay at the Premier Inn.

47. The following morning, we were downstairs in the restaurant with other families who had survived including Ed Daffarn and Mr Thompson. A member of staff who worked at the hotel told all of the families in the group that we would be staying in the hotel until we were notified by the council that other accommodation had been found. I think this person may have been the manager.
48. The reception would tell us how long we were booked in to stay at the hotel, and we would receive letters from the hotel under our room doors telling us that our stay had been extended by a certain amount of time. We received these letters monthly.
49. We lost everything in the fire. We needed to replace everything we had lost including clothes, identity documents and toys. We were trying to work out how to provide for ourselves to put the family back together again. We needed to try and create some kind of stability in terms of food, clothes, schooling. We needed to try to survive in this new environment. We had to start from scratch. To do that, we needed to go back to the Latimer Road area, where the relief centres were and where my children's school was. The hotel was too far away from Latimer Road. Initially we were provided with taxis to travel, but after a while we were each given a bus pass. I cannot recall exactly how the taxis were organised but I think this was organised when we were assigned our first key worker, Nina Santiago. The journey from the hotel to Latimer Road to get the support I needed for my family would take around 30 to 40 minutes and it was necessary to take two different buses to get there.
50. The hotel provided breakfast, lunch and dinner. However, these were at set times and if you were not in the hotel at the set time, you could not have your meals. During Ramadan we would go to the Westway to break our fast with the community. After Ramadan had finished, we ate breakfast with other families at the hotel, and we would always eat our lunch outside of the hotel. The key worker provided us with food vouchers to spend on food at the hotel but the menu was very limited. There was no halal food available, so as a Muslim our choice was limited to pizza or fish. It was the same menu each day. The food was alright in the short term and if you were a tourist,

but in the long term you would want a more healthy and nutritious diet for your family. If we wanted to go out and eat we would have to use our own money. We could afford to eat out sometimes but it was too expensive to eat out all the time and I obviously was not able to cook for my family, as we didn't have a kitchen. We relied on the support and generosity of volunteers for food. There was an Egyptian family, a woman whose husband had a restaurant and she would bring food to the hotel for us and other families. They were not part of an organisation, they just did this voluntarily. She would text me and ask how many families needed food. Then she would drop the food off and we would eat separately in our rooms. Our rooms were not big enough to eat with my mother and brother's family.

51. The facilities at the Premier Inn were not great. We did have a small fridge in our room to store food. However were not able to do the laundry there, so we had to find somewhere outside of the hotel to do our laundry. I was not familiar with area where we were staying and did not know where to take our laundry. Although my mother had been evacuated from her flat in Testerton Walk, she told me she was able to return to do her washing whilst she was living in the hotel with us. So when I needed to sort out my family's laundry I would carry two large laundry bags across West London to Testerton Walk, taking the two buses to get there and back. It was exhausting making this trip with the family's laundry.

52. Living in the hotel was difficult. It was also a very small hotel, and there was not much space for us as a family. The bedrooms were very small and not large enough for us to spend time together as a family. The only communal areas available to us was the hotel lobby and the restaurant. There was no playroom or facilities available for the children. We would either stay in our rooms or in the reception area. It was claustrophobic and we had to make sure that our children were quiet and on their best behaviour. We did not want to upset the hotel and other guests who may have been on holiday. It was not a good place for children. Before the fire, they would usually spend their time playing with toys or playing games on their laptop. After two weeks, a friend of mine who works at the Venture centre provided us with a laptop to use. She also provided my daughter with a nursery place. The nursery staff were very helpful. My youngest child was given colouring to do by the staff at the hotel, but there was nothing else there to occupy the children.

53. In hotels people are usually on holiday and it isn't ideal for family life. The noise of the guests would often disrupt sleep and the housekeepers would often be working outside the rooms from 7am.
54. There was no designated person at the Premier Inn who we could ask for help with things. There was just the manager. The staff there were friendly, respectful and nice. We would receive bulletins, letters and newsletters from RBKC that the hotel reception gave us.
55. We heard on the news that the Premier Inn had the same cladding as what was on Grenfell Tower. We were then worried and upset. How could they put us in the same type of building again? I went to reception to ask them and they told me the cladding was not on that particular hotel. We felt reassured after they had confirmed this.

Staying at the Hilton

56. We stayed at the Premier Inn from 14 June 2017 to the end of July 2017. We wanted to move somewhere that was closer to Latimer Road. Youssef contacted the housing team at RBKC and told them we wanted to move closer to our children's schools, the support centres and our community. I cannot remember who he spoke to. I remember I spoke to our key worker to help us move, but she did not help us. Eventually, Youssef was able to get us moved to the Hilton in Shepherd's Bush with the help of a volunteer from the Westway. Later on, RBKC contacted us to say they had two rooms for us, but it was too late we had already arranged to be moved through the volunteer.
57. At the Hilton, we asked for rooms with an adjoining door as our children were still very young and we wanted to be closely connected with them, particularly after what we had been through as a family. Unfortunately, the adjoining rooms were allocated to someone else. It would have been much better to have had an adjoining door, especially when my children were back from school and I wanted to check in on them. Without the adjoining door, I also had to get dressed and put my headscarf on every time I wanted to see my children. It was then very hard for us to monitor them and to be easily available when they needed us as we could only access their room from the public corridor. It meant we had less privacy and security.

58. The room at the Hilton was a little bigger than our room at the Premier Inn, but it was much nicer. Although, we had a fridge in our room there were no cooking facilities. The staff there were very polite. The restaurant was quite big and there were more food choices. The food was generally better than at the Premier Inn, but it was still limited and less nutritious than you would prepare at home. We were also given the wrong information about some of the items on the menu. Sometimes we were told it was halal and sometimes we were told it wasn't. There was more flexibility at the Hilton. We got a card that we could use on food both inside and outside the hotel and they had laundry facilities that we could use.
59. The Hilton was also much better than the Premier Inn for the children. The communal areas were wider and bigger than the Premier Inn and they had a more communal areas outside your room where you could sit. In the Christmas school holidays they kept the restaurant open all day and provided a PlayStation and reading books for the children so they did not need to stay in their room. We were also able to use the gym and the sauna.
60. The charity Hestia would come to the Hilton in the evening and provide games for the children and counselling for us.
61. We stayed at the Hilton from August 2017 until 31 March 2018. Although it was better it was still not a home and it was difficult to live for such a long time in a hotel. We had to go to reception every month or couple of months to renew our stay and change our keys. We had no idea that we would be staying in the hotel for so long.

Financial assistance

62. We lost everything in the fire. Our home and all of our possessions. We had to replace everything. We didn't have our bank cards and had no access to our bank accounts. I had heard through word of mouth that money had been raised by the public and donations were being provided to the survivors to allow us to buy things for ourselves. I had to go and find out how to get this for my family.
63. For the two of us it is not in our experience to rely on benefits and handouts. Youssef and I have always worked and been self-reliant. It was challenging and difficult to have

to rely on the charity of other people in order to get the basics and to provide for ourselves and our family. We had no choice because we didn't have access to our own funds and the council wasn't stepping forward to provide for us.

64. Various organisations were distributing donations to survivors. I went to the Portobello Rugby Club, the Clement James Centre, the Notting Hill Methodist Church and the Al Manaar Cultural Heritage Centre to collect money from different charities and money raised by the Evening Standard appeal. I would give my name and Tower address and I would be provided with the donation. It was a stressful and humiliating experience, having to queue up outside centres for money.

65. I did not receive any information from RBKC in the first seven days about any financial support they were offering. In July 2017, I was told to go to the Post Office to receive a one-off payment of £5,000 from the government.

Grenfell United (GU)

66. Grenfell United was set up in the first or second night after the fire to be the voice of tower residents and to be a source of information and support. No one from Government or RBKC was there to support us, we only had our own community. There was a complete absence of information in the first few days. We felt abandoned by the authorities and left to fend for ourselves. Those who were bereaved would have a Police Family Liaison Officer (FLO) appointed to them who I think were intended to provide them with information and support. I didn't have any experience of FLOs and only spoke to the Police at the Rugby Portobello. The residents initially involved in GU were Willy Thompson, Shahin, Ed, Turafat, Tiago, Miguel, Sid, Mahad. They were supported by Oliver McTernan and Jordan from Respect. Oliver was a priest and he knew the area. He encouraged people to come together as a unified group; to speak as one voice to RBKC and Government. We needed to set up GU because we wanted to get answers that we were not getting as individuals. We needed to be an organisation of the people from the tower itself, we all had the same issues and problems. It was better to have one voice that would be listened to rather than lots of separate voices that were being ignored.

67. In the first few days following the fire, there was the first GU gathering at the Rugby Portobello club, to ask who would like to put their name forward to volunteer for GU. I was brought into GU for the second meeting, because Turafat pushed me to be there. She said we need more women. I can't remember when the second meeting was, I think it was in the second week. When I joined I took the role of secretary to GU. I was the secretary twice and the third time was Tiago. It involved taking notes of meetings and supporting the chair and the vice chair in meetings. I felt like I had to be out of the hotel all the time, there was too much stuff to do. I was heavily involved in GU. It would affect my mental health if I stayed in the hotel for long periods of time.

Support for bereaved, survivors and residents

68. Our main focus in GU was to find out what support was available to survivors. People volunteered to get involved. At the beginning, people volunteered to find out the issues tower residents had and who we could approach for assistance. We wanted to know where they were going to be staying and what was happening to us. We wanted to know what support could be offered to children and those with disabilities in families. We also needed to find out who the survivors were, to get a proper list of those who died and who had survived. We needed to know how many people we had lost. We had to use the Rugby Club's list of the residents to find out who had made it out of the fire. Aside from the key worker we were allocated, we had to rely on GU to find out information. We had to do all of the running around ourselves. We had to do this, to look after one another because no one else was. Once we knew the needs of the survivors we could then try and get help needed.

69. GU could talk to the Police and RBKC to try and get information. I don't know if that was part of the idea at the beginning, but GU became an information channel to survivors and bereaved.

70. In the first few weeks, we developed drop-in sessions for the survivors at the hotel Crown Plaza in Earls Court. One of the survivors was living there and he spoke to the manager and the hotel let us have the room downstairs. We had the drop in sessions for three weeks after the fire. It would be me and Turafat sitting there from about 6pm to 10pm at night. People would come and give their names. We would ask have they got enough food? What support they had? Have they been in touch with the NHS and what

help they needed? From the sessions we found out who survived the fire. People would come to ask about those missing, it was mainly survivor tower residents that would come.

71. The only information I would see about those that were missing was through the pictures and posters, for Jessica, the Wahabi family, the Italian's, the Syrian family, the Afghan family. I saw people putting up these pictures in the community. It was initially outside Portobello area and the Westway.
72. At the Crown Plaza we would be getting this information; Turafat, Shahin and I. We would feed back to the committee and we had a list of everyone's needs. We had Vicky who volunteered from Universal, she would help with gathering information. She would put it onto a system and we would try and coordinate and get in touch with individuals and organisations to provide help for those people.
73. GU is an organisation which puts survivors and victims first, because otherwise we would all be on the streets, and vulnerable to being exploited by the media. The politicians were not there to help us. GU has continued since the fire to try and support and be responsive to the needs of the tower community.
74. Even if there had been proper organisation from the government and the council after the fire, it would still have been necessary for us to come together as GU as it is better to be represented as a group rather than individually, as we all went through the same thing. If there had been organisation from RBKC and the government, then perhaps GU would have been a different type of organisation. Rather than a campaigning organisation having to fight to get support for survivors and bereaved, perhaps it would have been more focused on counselling and therapeutic needs.

GU family services

75. I am a committee member and I head up the work and support for families. We pushed for the children to have support in their education at schools following the fire. We managed to secure educational funds for extra tutoring, activities and support of

traumatised children at school. We successfully campaigned for the GU Space in Kensington to have children activities including a tuition and homework club.

76. We got in touch with families, set up a number of family activities such as visits to the park. We work closely with NHS and the therapeutic staff and those organisations that support the bereaved. We try to put children at the centre of initiatives and talk to them about what support they need. One of the things we did was work with FLOs and do a memorial day for the children only.
77. Ahmed, Adel, Tiago and Karim at GU are the Inquiry people and are more directly involved in what is happening with the Inquiry. Turafat and myself focus more on the family services at GU. We have been doing this role since 2018. Before the fire, I advocated on behalf of women and so it feels natural for me to be involved in the family services.
78. GU keeps campaigning to make sure survivors aren't overlooked and helps with their recovery. It enables families and children to get back on their feet to try and live more normal lives. We are campaigning for the removal of cladding and for fire safety. We want to stop another tragedy from happening again. We want justice for the 72 people that died.

Support and Information from Key workers

79. My first key worker, Nina, was from Ealing Council. We had our first meeting with her two days after the fire. She came with a RBKC housing officer. We had her until July 2017. She was really good. She was proactive. She organised the taxis for the school runs and support from The Venture Centre, a community centre in RBKC that provided support for children and families. They took my youngest child to nurse so she did not have to stay in the hotel all the time. She also helped us in replacing our identity documents after the fire. She would follow things up for us.
- Anthea Thomson was the second key worker
80. I had four other key workers after Nina. After Nina my key worker was Anthea Thomson. Then I had Aisha for two months, Francios Smith for three months and Cynthia for six months. When the key workers changed we would not be told in

advance, it would just happen. We would have to go through everything again with each new key worker. For one of the key workers, I knew when I met her that she was not going to last. She was too high up in the council and did not have experience of frontline work. It was emotionally difficult and frustrating to have changes of key worker and caused us to stop relying on them in the end.

Support and Information from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

81. We had a meeting with the housing minister, Alok Sharma MP, on 3 July 2017. He took our name and said he would give us a phone call the next day, which he did. However he did not do anything of substance for us. It was just a tick box for him. We met all the housing ministers and it was always the same. They would say they were going to help but then not do anything. There was no follow up to their promises.
82. RBKC only got in touch when they placed us in the hotel. Several days later they came to the hotel and did a housing assessment and this is when they provided us with a key worker. This was the only contact we had with them in the days after the fire.
83. RBKC should have been there on the first night. They should have showed us where to go in the aftermath of the fire, and they should have had staff down at the relief centres helping and organising things. We needed support, to know what to do next, where to go, who we needed to speak to, where we were going to live, and what support was available. There was no information from RBKC to help us or signpost us to support. We should not have had to rely on others.
84. There was no humanity in the way that RBKC dealt with things. They did not take into account the specific needs of each family or resident. There was no one to respond to our needs, no one to tell us what is going on and what will happen. Instead we were getting stressed and anxious because we didn't know what will happen tomorrow or where we would be staying, no one was being realistic with us about our predicament. Our insecurity and lack of communication from RBKC is what felt inhumane.

Public Communication

85. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, we mainly received information on the support and services available from word of mouth or WhatsApp groups and texts with other residents from the Tower. Shahin set up one of the WhatsApp groups in the second week. There were lots of WhatsApp groups. You would be added to different WhatsApp groups; I remember being added to one for the Latimer Christian Centre. There would be one for the volunteers. There was one for family groups which would tell you if there were any activities or outings for the children.
86. We would usually be aware of meetings through WhatsApp groups or word of mouth but I was not aware of any official formal meetings to tell us what to do or where to go or who had survived.
87. I remember that for around four to five months after the fire, we received newsletters which would give us information of action being taken by the council

Needs of Specific Groups

88. The support available for children, the elderly and the disabled was lacking. When you really needed something you would have to fight for it. That is why I became involved in GU so that we, as the residents, could deal with these things together.
89. In the first week, I can't remember if anyone came to ask about my children's welfare. In both the hotels my children were getting bored of the same food every day and the very restrictive environment. Even though the Hilton was nicer and the charity Hestia would come in the evening and provide games for the children, it was still restrictive.
90. My son was really impacted by the fire. He stayed with his friends after the fire to stay away from the uncertainty and the drama of the immediate aftermath. He went to Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA). The support offered by the school was very basic. At first they referred him to the Place2Be, which was not the right therapy. The fire and the trauma suffered has had a significant impact on his education.
91. We had a lot of meetings with KAA about his progress, the difficulties he was facing and having and the support they were offering. We had to push the school hard for extra

educational support for him. The meetings were with the Head of Year; I had to get a person from Clement James to support me at these meetings, to get the message across. The school did not seem to understand that he was a survivor of the fire and it was necessary to have the support of the key worker as well as the support from Clement James. The school didn't understand what he had been through and how our lives were affected. The key worker did attend with me on two occasions but the key worker support did not make any difference.

92. My daughter went to Thomas Jones School. The help from the head teacher at her school was phenomenal. She was doing her SATs at the time. Her teacher provided emotional support and he would check in on the family too. He was very supportive. They also provided therapy for the children. After the fire, they provided the children with school uniform. My youngest daughter was registered at the Venture Centre.

Temporary and Permanent accommodation

93. We were in hotel accommodation and living in two rooms for 10 months. It went on and on and we did not know when we would have a home. Dealing with the re-housing process was frustrating. We spoke to RBKC housing nearly every day that we were in the hotel. We did not know when we would be out of the hotel. I remember meeting Alok Sharma, the housing minister at the time, and he promised that we would be rehoused soon. Then we heard from Theresa May that we would be rehoused in July. We would constantly chase up RBKC housing. We moved out of the hotel and into a flat in April 2018 but it only started to feel like home after maybe four or five months.

Psychological and healthcare support

94. After the fire my GP referred me to counselling. The NHS contacted us about this as well. I started therapy at the St Charles Centre which I have continued doing.

95. My daughter has had counselling through school, play therapy and art therapy. When she started secondary school at Holland Park School, they referred her to the

‘Place2Be’; this is a charity that provides emotional support to children in schools. My older son was also seen by a counsellor through ‘Place2Be’ at his school.

Ongoing impact of the fire on you

96. I cover some of the ongoing impact of the fire on my mental health at paragraph 46 of my Phase 1 statement. I continue to suffer symptoms of the psychological injuries arising from the fire and it has affected me physically too. I will not go into further detail here in this statement for the Inquiry save that these symptoms affect me daily and throughout my life.

Adequacy of response & lessons learned


97. As we came down from the building we didn’t know where we needed to go, where the meeting point was? You see your home is on fire, where do you go next? There was no sign, no one. The information should have been given by the police and the LFB, who should have been told it by the council. There should have been a place where we could have gathered. A place where the council could come and say this is where you are staying tonight.

98. The day after the fire there was nothing in place for our children. They should have been a place where the children would be looked after like a centre or whilst the parents tried to get things like toiletries, food and accommodation sorted out.

99. It was absolute chaos after the fire. The experience was humiliating. After the horror of escaping the burning tower we ended up walking around centres trying to get hold of a change of clothes and a pair of shoes. It is not a humane experience.

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: 
Mouna El Ogbani

DATE: 29.02.20