

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF ESPERANZA LOPEZ**

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1. I, Esperanza Lopez will say as follows:
2. I make this statement from my own personal knowledge and from matters that I have been told about by others; where the information does not come from my own personal knowledge, I make this clear below.
3. I am a Core Participant of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
4. At the time of the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017, I was a resident at 102 Grenfell Walk and lived there for approximately ten years. I lived there with my daughter Marlyn Lopez, my granddaughters, [REDACTED] and Marlyn's ex-partner Diego Ortiz.
5. I was in Leeds on the night of the fire and I did not witness the spread, however I returned the next morning.
6. In this statement I have specifically addressed what the Inquiry has asked me to address, namely Modules 3 and 4.
7. I did not give a statement in Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
8. I did not give a statement to the MPS.

## **MODULE 3**

### **Fire safety systems**

#### Flat door

9. The TMO never changed the doors or anything else in my flat, even though many people on the Walk had their kitchens and doors changed. The only things fixed in the house were fixed by us. Diego, my daughter's partner is a decorator, so he fixed it all. TMO did not fix anything. The only thing the TMO did was worry about the rent – if you do not pay them, they would threaten to take away the house and take you to court.
10. My front door was a heavy door and I remember there was a metal fixture at the bottom of the door. The door did close by itself.
11. Nobody told me if it was a fire-resistant door.

#### Bedroom doors

12. As soon as I moved into Grenfell Walk, they changed the bedroom doors, the owner was coming for these doors, they had good doors before. When I moved, they replaced it with very thin white doors – all the internal doors, they are the flimsy ones. Nobody told me if those doors were fire resistant but I suspect that they would atch on fire because it felt like they were made of cardboard on the inside.

#### Communal doors

13. We did not have to use a communal door to get out of the flat. You would use the staircase where you would come out of the garages and on the street.
14. There was a communal door near out flat, but it had been sealed, none of us had a key. I knew it was not a fire exit door because there would have been an emergency exit sign on it. The door had padlocks all over it.

#### Fire alarms/Smoke alarms

15. I am not sure whether we did have a smoke alarm or not.

#### Fire safety signage

16. I do not remember any fire safety signs on Grenfell Walk. I did not know where to go in case of the fire, I knew just to leave my flat, but no specific fire escape routes.
17. But I believe that with the amount of vandalism we had on Grenfell Walk we would not have seen any fire safety signs because they would be damaged.

#### Fire safety checks/inspections

18. I do not remember anyone checking the house for fire safety since I moved into Grenfell Walk.

#### Fire safety advice

19. TMO never showed us any fire escape routes and we did not receive any fire safety advice.
20. In the case of fire, I would have gone through the walkway through the other stairs.

#### Fire safety complaints

21. We complained to each other about fire safety because I was frightened of fire. When we were on the balcony, we were a few feet from the tower.
22. When we were inside the house, we would turn all of the plugs off, I was afraid this would catch fire. My daughter and I were always afraid of something happening, we did not like the house, the rooms were underneath as the stairs were very narrow. We would sit down and we felt like the tower was coming on top of us, I said that if the tower falls down we will be dead.

23. I told my daughter Marlyn this and she said please don't say that because I am frightened. We did not like the balcony as it seemed like it was moving. It seemed like it was moving, even if it was not, I did not like living in front of the tower, but I accepted to lived in Grenfell Walk because it is the area I know.

## **MODULE 4**

### **Initial relief centres**

24. On the day of the fire I was in Leeds visiting my daughter. The next day as soon as I found out about the fire I came back.
25. I went to look for my daughter Marlyn and my neighbour told me that she was in St Clemens James Centre. I remember that there were many people there and that all of them were very sad. We had food there, which was provided for us. The Columbian embassy called us to see how many Colombians have died, but I said I did not know. I did tell the Colombian Embassy that a child called Jessica has not been found.
26. I went to my friend Caroline's house who lived close to the community, but Marlyn and Diego stayed at St Clements James Centre. She let me stay there for a few days, it was near Latimer Road and I could see the burnt Tower from her window. I went there because I had nowhere else to go and Marlyn and Diego spent time looking for hotels for us, because the volunteers at Clemens James told them that this was available. I did not want to sleep at the Clement James because I am afraid of crowds.
27. The KCTMO initially texted my daughter Lorena to find out what had happened to me, Marlyn, Diego and [REDACTED] We were told to go to Westway. This is where they gave us a keyworker. I did not ring any hotels, my daughters did it for me because I spoke limited English and had high blood pressure at the time.
28. The keyworker that they gave me was Spanish, her name was Nana and she was very helpful. I found it easy to communicate with her and when I asked her what was going on, she told us to go to Westway, where we received £400. This was around the Saturday, so 17<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Later, not in the first seven days, Nana was able to get me an interpreter.



29. At the Westway there were lawyers and volunteers who helped us with many things. People were going crazy as they were frightened. It is hard when you do not have your belongings and your house.
30. I remember when the Rugby Club needed to talk to me on the phone when they were giving out some emergency money, they did provide an interpreter to explain this to me.

### **Placements in hotels**

#### Aber Hotel Grosvenor

31. The town hall contacted us to give us a hotel, they moved us to the Grosvenor Hotel in Victoria around Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
32. My daughter Marlyn and Diego organised everything at the hotel because I spoke a limited amount of English.
33. They gave us two rooms, there were four beds in a big room where Marlyn stayed with Diego and my granddaughters.
34. The staff at the hotel would not let us eat the food we wanted there. They said that all of us that have been rehoused as a result of Grenfell can only have things to eat from a set menu. The keyworker and staff at the hotel said this and Diego and Marlyn explained it to me.
35. My daughter and my grandchildren were hungry inside the hotel rooms. At the Curve they would give us free food, but every time I ate something it would be bad on my stomach. I felt depressed to see my daughter and granddaughter crying. They said we are not paying you.
36. Money was not as important to me as security and stability, the government thought our problems would be fixed by just giving us money.

37. After a few months we were moved to the Gloucester Millenium Hotel, because my daughter Marlyn wanted to move. She was very upset after the fire and everything would annoy her.

#### Gloucester Millenium Hotel

38. At this hotel we would not have a separate menu, we ate as everyone else did, but I did not eat much there, instead I would go to the Curve to eat.
39. The volunteers at Westway told us to that we could go to the Curve. I would watch TV there and was taught how to make embroidery. I was going to go to English classes. There were also lawyers there every day to help us and people from immigration services. I would stay at the Curve usually until 7pm and then go to a friend's house and then go back to the hotel.

#### Financial Suport

40. Someone called Dion from the TMO called me 5 days after the fire and she gave us £1200 to be able to eat in the hotel.
41. I also received compensation for credit pension. Everyone involved in Grenfell received this.
42. I thought the money was enough even though we shared it with Marlyn.
43. Red Cross also gave me some money which did not come in the first seven days after the fire but came a lot later.

#### Donations

44. We used to get clothes that were donated would wither be tiny or huge. These were mostly secondhand clothes.
45. There were also dolls, toys and teddy bears that were donated by the people. The people who were giving them out said I was not allowed to have them. I had to take many identification documents so they would give me the dolls to my grandchildren. They had nothing to play with, I cried because it was unjust. My neighbour, helped me and told them that this lady was involved in the fire.

46. I felt humiliated but could not defend myself because I understood little English.

#### Psychological support

47. I do not think RBKC provided psychological support in the first seven days only two months after.

48. I am not sure when, it was after the first seven days of the fire, there were some doctor and psychiatrists in Westway.

49. Volunteers in the Westway told me that there were psychologists who were in the Curve, I think this was at around January 2018.

50. Speaking to psychologists helps me very much.

#### **Needs of specific groups**

51. Any support in the immediate aftermath that I received were mostly provided by Marlyn, as I found everything out from her. I do not know where she got the information from as I did not speak to anyone, because I could not, but she would be the one to get the information and pass it onto me.

52. Without Marlyn and Lorena I do not think I would be able to speak to the council.

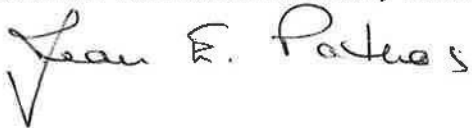
53. I found out who died in the fire from the pictures of people that were put on near Latimer Road tube station. I did not talk to RBKC about information regarding the missing people as my English is limited.

#### **Adequacy of response**

54. I think that RBKC did help us and everyone did what they could, but they did not do anything in the first seven days as everyone was too confused, and they were hiding from people. I thought it would have been better for them to organise it calmly, but it was chaotic.

55. I do not know what RBKC could have done better as people were so angry and they were frightened of coming forward. They tried to calm people down by giving them money.
56. The people who helped me the most were my family, the volunteers, Nana and Mr Mahmood.

I, Jean Pateras, a member of the Institute of Translators and Interpreters, can confirm that I have read the attached statement which is in English to the witness Esperanza Lopez in Spanish and that she has confirm to me that she has understood the contents of the statements and agrees that it is accurate and factually correct.

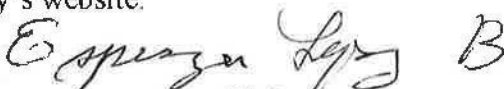
Signed: 

Dated: 09/03/2020

#### **Statement of Truth**

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

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

Signed:  B

Dated: 9-13-2020