

**Witness Statement of: Shantilal Patel**

**No. of statement: 2**

**Exhibit: SP1**

**Date of statement: 4 March 2020**

**GRENFELL TOWER FIRE PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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**SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHANTILAL PATEL**

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I, **SHANTILAL PATEL**, will say as follows:

1. I lived in Flat 56 of Grenfell Tower. I make this statement for the purposes of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Fire Public Inquiry.
2. I provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry dated 28 June 2018 (URN: IWS00000798) for the purpose of Phase 1. I also provided three statements to the Metropolitan Police Service dated 26 June 2017, and 14 November 2017.
3. This statement addresses the issues within modules 3 (fire safety within the Tower and communication with residents) and 4 (aftermath) from the Inquiry's Phase 2 schedule.
4. 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).

## **Background**

5. My wife, my first son and I moved to Flat 56 in Grenfell Tower in 1984. My second son Chiraag was born in 1986. We bought the property from the Council in 2001 and became leaseholders at that point.
6. I deal with my background and life in the Tower at paragraphs 2 to 6 of my witness statement for Phase 1.
7. I have found it very difficult to think about life before the fire and the aftermath of the fire. I do not feel ready or able to provide a detailed explanation of all of my thoughts about the refurbishment, although I did have some very strong views and problems with the refurbishment at the time. Below I have set out some thoughts and memories relating to the refurbishment project and some other issues in relation to the Tower, and a very short summary of what happened to me and my family following the fire.

## **The Refurbishment**

8. I did not have any idea about what material was going to be used to clad the outside of the building. I do remember that we were told what colour it was going to be, but I do not remember being told anything else. I remember that most people were more worried about the changes that had been proposed to the inside of the flats.

## Cladding

9. At one point during the refurbishment, when the cladding was being fitted to the outside of the building, there were some high winds one evening. The newly fixed cladding rails rattled all night long.

10. I looked out of my window and could see that some of the bolts used on the cladding rails looked too short, and suspected that some of the fastenings had not been tightened properly. This was worrying and so I emailed the TMO to warn them of the problem. I never really got a response to my comments, apart from that the rattling was only due to high winds, and that this would not happen once all the cladding was fitted. A copy of some of my emails and the brief responses I received have been provided to the Inquiry: [URN: RYD00028012] and [URN: RYD00027752].

### Windows

11. New windows were fitted in my flat in August 2015. There were however problems with the windows that were fitted. One window had a safety catch missing, meaning that the window could be opened all the way. Another was jammed shut so that you could not open it at all. To me, it was more evidence of shoddy work or poor products being used. I tried to call Lynda Prentice – the liaison officer who worked for Rydon, but she did not answer any of my calls. So I emailed Claire Williams at the TMO, as she was managing the refurbishment. Someone from Rydon came to my flat the following day to check the windows. I was told that someone from the window fitting team would come to fix the issue the following week. Copies of these emails have been provided to the Inquiry at [URN: RYD00049391].
12. No one came to my flat in the weeks following to fix the windows. I emailed Lynda Prentice to inform her that the windows were still broken. Lynda responded to say that someone would come to the flat the following day at 11am. A man came to the flat the following day, looked at the windows, and then said that he did not have the right parts to fix the windows with him, and that he would fix it “later” once more parts had been ordered. He told me that there were a number of windows in the Tower with the same problem. He did manage to remove a part from the jammed window so that it could open. A copy of my emails to Lynda have been provided to the Inquiry at [URN: RYD00053102].

13. I sent another email to Claire Williams following this visit, because I wanted her to be aware that there seemed to be a number of different problems with the windows that had been installed. I sent her pictures of a part of the windows which had a screw sticking through part of the rubber seal that was supposed to keep the frame sealed against the building. I also let her know that a number of windows did not have safety catches, and that I thought there were issues with the installation team and manufacturers of the windows. The following day workmen came to my flat to check the problem. They simply cut off the exposed end of the screw and left. A copy of my email to Claire has been provided to the Inquiry at [URN: RYD00053240].

### Painting

14. The lobbies were also painted at the end of the refurbishment works. I remember that the paint that was used seemed to be very low quality. It covered what had previously been high quality, graffiti resistant paint. The doors leading to the rubbish chute were painted, but only on one side – the inside was the same as before. I emailed Claire Williams about this issue, but was just told that the redecoration of the rubbish chute room was not part of Rydon's contract, and that it would be organised separately after Rydon had left the Tower. A copy of my email and Claire's response is exhibited at [SP/1].

### **Lifts**

15. I remember that the lifts in the Tower used to break down on a regular basis. It was a big problem and I contacted the TMO about this. The lifts continued to break down right up until the fire.

### **Aftermath**




16. It is difficult to speak about the events following the fire now. I find it very stressful to think about and I have not been able to fully address what happened in the days following the fire, how I felt, or exactly how it affected me and my family. I can say that the effect has been severe.
17. After the fire, my wife and I were able to stay with family as my brother and our son Chiraag both have flats nearby in West London. We were luckier than some others in that respect as we had somewhere to go. A week after the fire we were offered two rooms in the Hilton in Olympia.
18. About 6 weeks after the fire, we were offered temporary accommodation, a 2 bedroom flat near Gloucester Road. We liked the flat. It was spacious and big enough for me and my wife, and for family to stay when they wanted to. We stayed there for about a year before moving on to the home we live in now.
19. During the days following the fire, we found out that we could get counselling at the St Charles Centre for Health and Wellbeing in West London. I went there and had a course of counselling.
20. We were allocated a key worker after the fire. In the months following they changed very often, so that overall we had 4 or 5 key workers - I cannot remember exactly. I generally did not ask much of the key workers and relied on my family for support. We have however had key workers who have visited us to give us updates and information, which has been helpful.

## 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: 

DATED: 04/03/2020

SHANTILAL PATEL