

THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

STATEMENT OF HAYAT ELSANOSI

I, Hayat Elsanosi, WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. I make this statement to provide evidence to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry on matters relevant to module 4 (aftermath) as specified in the document entitled 'List of Issues for BSR phase 2 witness statements'. The statements I make are from my own knowledge or belief unless otherwise stated. If not from my own knowledge I will identify the source. Especially due to the fact that I was outside the UK at the time of the fire and had no automatic right of entry into the country, it is not possible to convey the extent of the difficulties I have suffered by limiting myself to the seven days following the fire. I am, however, aware of the purpose of the module which is to capture an understanding of how bereaved, survivors and residents experienced the immediate aftermath of the fire. The events I describe in this statement are rooted in that seven day period and I therefore address them in this statement.
2. This is my first statement to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. I have not made a statement to the Metropolitan Police Service.
3. My sister Fathia Elsanousi, my niece Isra Ibrahim and my nephew Abufras Ibrahim died in the Grenfell Tower fire. Fathia and Isra lived on the 23rd floor in flat 206. Abufras was visiting on the night of the fire.

Events of 14 June 2017 and subsequent days

4. On the night of 14 June 2017 a second cousin who lives in London called his sister who lives in Sudan who contacted me at my home in Sudan to tell me that there had been a fire at the Tower where my sister lived. I was very upset. I turned on the television and saw the images of the Tower engulfed by flames. I had to leave the room. I could not watch the images.
5. I knew that my sister would not be able to use the stairs to escape from the fire. She had mobility problems due to multiple health difficulties, including a history of strokes and heart problems. My sister had asked for a ground floor flat because of these difficulties, but RBKC had refused this because of the fact that she had access to a lift. Of course, the lift would be no use in the fire.
6. On the night of 14 June 2017, I spoke to my nephew Abubaker, Fathia's other son, in London and to other friends who lived in London. I asked them if they knew anything about Fathia, Isra and Abufras. I wanted to know if anyone had seen them and whether they were safe. I kept calling and calling and asking and asking. It was a crazy time. This lasted for three days: Three days without sleeping or eating or drinking. I could do nothing but worry about my sister. On the fourth day, my nephew called me to say that my sister and niece had not been found and that they had lost all hope and that my sister and niece must have died in the fire. He also told me that my nephew had been with my sister at her flat on the night of the fire and that he had also not survived.
7. About a month later my nephew telephoned to tell me that someone from the British Embassy in Sudan was going to contact me and tell me that I would need to travel to London to provide DNA to assist with the identification of my sister's body. I was so devastated by the deaths and I wanted to travel to London. I wanted to find out what had happened and to be close to people who had known my sister, niece and nephew.

8. My passport had expired so I had to arrange for this to be renewed and I had to pay a fee for this. I then had to complete a form for my visa. I was not given any assistance with completing this form which was in English and so I had to pay someone to assist me with this. I could not afford to pay for the plane ticket, and so my brother, who lived in Prague and who has since died, gave me the money to pay for the ticket. This was a very traumatic time and I had little support from the British authorities to assist me with my travel and visa arrangements.

Accommodation and financial support in London

9. I travelled to this country on 27 July 2017. When I arrived in London my nephew met me at the airport. I was provided with hotel accommodation. I did not speak any English and I did not understand what I should do. I remember going for breakfast on my first morning in the hotel and this cost £18. I could not afford to pay for this, and I was worried about how I would survive in London. I was later visited by a social worker who said that I would be given £600. This money was not given to me but to my nephew and this caused some difficulties for me as I could not access the money when I needed it. I found it very hard to live in a hotel without access to cooking facilities. I was unable to eat properly. I had stomach problems and had to see a GP. I was unable to buy simple things such as the cream I use on my face to cover my burns. I had to rely on my nephew speaking to a social worker on my behalf to ask for money for me. When winter came I did not have winter clothes and had to rely upon the support of friends to help me buy items such as a winter coat.
10. My relationship with my nephew broke down and I then had to rely on friends to help me. Luckily they were able to help me find a solicitor and they helped me obtain a key worker. Without their assistance I would not have been able to survive in London. It was not clear to me what support I was entitled to and my friends had to be very persistent in order to establish the level of support that should be made available to me.

11. I have asked the council to move me out of the hotel as it is difficult to live in a hotel for three years. However they have told me that they are unable to do this until the Home Office grants me leave to remain.

Family Liaison Officer ('FLO')

12. Despite being a bereaved family member I have not been provided with a police family liaison officer.
13. Due to the lack of a family liaison officer I have had to rely on my solicitor to advise me on the role of the Coroner and to keep me updated on the police investigation.
14. The fact that I have not been given a family liaison officer has made me feel marginalised and unimportant in the eyes of the police. This is very difficult particularly because they asked me to attend this country to assist with identifying my sister's body. I provided a mouth swab to assist with the identification of my sister's body and this was a traumatic experience.

Immigration status

15. My immigration status has caused me additional distress. I have to renew my visa every six months, this is stressful and makes me anxious. I cannot leave this country until the truth is uncovered about the circumstances of the deaths and the causes of the fire. I no longer have a life in Sudan. I could only live there because my sister, Fathia, supported me and now that she has died there is no one to support me at all.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I confirm that I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed: Hayat Elsanosi

Dated: 26.12.2020