

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

PHASE 2 WITNESS STATEMENT OF ZAKARIYA CHEBIOUNI

I, Zakariya Chebiouni, previously of Flat 66, 9th Floor of Grenfell Tower, Grenfell Road, London, W11 1TQ, WILL SAY as follows:

1. This statement should be read alongside my first Inquiry Witness Statement dated 9 September 2018 (IWS00001076), my Metropolitan Police Statement dated 08 May 2018 (MET00015682) and the transcript of my police interview dated 20 July 2017 (MET00016806).

Fire safety systems

I list below the defects I identified prior to, during and post the refurbishment:

Lifts

2. I detailed at paragraph 5 of my IWS the issues with the lifts before, during and post the refurbishment. I wish to add that the lifts had two doors the outer and the inner door. Both doors were meant to open and close together. However, often the inside door would not work properly and would have to be opened or closed manually.

Flat doors, including the self-closing devices and smoke seals/strips

3. I detailed at paragraph 6 of my IWS and page 20 of the MPS transcript the replacement of our front door prior to the refurbishment. I wish to add that the frame of the door was made of plastic with sealant around the edge. Bits of the sealant would come off from around the frame. There was a metal ledge at the bottom of the door and there was a gap

between that and the floor. If you stood in front of the door you could feel a draught at your feet.

Communal doors throughout the building (including the stair doors), including the self-closing devices and smoke seals/strips

4. The communal doors to the staircase were restricted, like they had a soft closer.
5. When you entered the tower there was a glass wall separating the corridor area and the stairway. The glass did not go all the way to the ceiling, there was a large gap big enough to climb over.

Windows, including the window reveals and kitchen extractor fans

6. I detailed at paragraph 7 of my IWS and page 16 of the MPS transcript (MET00016806) the replacement of our windows.
7. When the guy came round to fix the window I watched how he did it. He closed the window and twisted the handle in different directions until it was fixed. He also twisted the key in different directions. It took him a while of trying it in different directions to fix it. He did not explain clearly how to fix it. Later on that day it came off the hinge that day. I fixed it by closing the window and trying the handle and key in different directions. It is hard to explain how I fixed it, as there was no real method.
8. After the refurbishment the window in my bedroom would not close properly, it would close to but not fully. It was similar to when a car door is not shut hard enough. This would mean I could hear the wind whistling through the gaps and it would make a rattling noise. This would sometimes keep me awake at night. The key lock in the window also came out which meant it would open all the way.

Fire safety signage

9. I detailed in paragraph 8 of my IWS my memory of the fire safety signage. I wish to add that before the refurbishment the stay put sign was in the landing above the vent and I think it was bigger. After the refurbishment there was a little sign in between the lifts.

Escape routes

10. The only escape route was down the stairs which were very narrow.

Emergency lighting

11. I did not notice any emergency lighting. On 14 June 2017 when I was exiting the building by the stairs the normal lighting was working. I think there may have been some floor where it was not working, as this was always the way it was.

Smoke control or ventilation system

12. I recall that there were grills on the landing but at the time I did not know what they were for. The grill on my cousin's floor used to make a noise, it also happened on our floor but it was quieter and I would hear it less often. The noise it made on my floor was a hollow noise similar to when you hold a sea shell to your ear. The noise on my cousins floor was whirring mechanical noise.

Smoke alarms

13. I explained in paragraph 9 of my IWS that as far as I knew the alarms in our flat were working at the time of the fire, however, when we left the flat it was full of smoke and the alarm had not gone off.

Gas works carried out by Cadent Gas/tRIIO at Grenfell Tower.

14. I detail at page 19 of the MPS transcript the additional pipes added during the refurbishment.

Fire safety checks/inspections

15. I do not recall any fire safety checks or inspections.

Fire safety advice

16. I first became aware of the stay put advice during a previous fire in 2012. I was at my cousin's flat and my mum called and told me there was a fire on our floor and not to come downstairs. She then came upstairs and rang the fire brigade. They told her we should stay put. After that fire I read the sign. It was not a sign that stood out. You had to make an effort to read it. I thought the stay put advice was stupid.
17. My bedroom door and the kitchen door did not shut. My door was not aligned right and therefore it did not close.

18. One time when I was about 8 or 9 I slammed my bedroom door and it came off the hinges.
19. Sometimes the tap water in the kitchen would come out dirty, red and dark colours. It sounded like the tap was struggling to get the water out. The sink was also always blocked.

Complaints of Disrepair

20. I did not make any complaints of disrepair as I was a child when I was living at Grenfell. However I do recall the following issues:
- a. My bedroom door would not close as it was not aligned correctly.
 - b. Once when I was 8 or 9 I slammed my bedroom door and it came off the hinges.
 - c. The tap in the kitchen would sound like it was struggling to get the water out. It would make weird noises. The water would sometimes come out a dark colour or red.
 - d. The sink in the kitchen would often get blocked.

AFTERMATH

Emergency Shelter and Accommodation

21. On 14 June 2017 there were so many members of the public offering money and clothes, but no-one official. I did not accept money from anyone and I only accepted some clothes from two friends. For the first two days I did not take clothes from anyone as I thought we were going to get back into the building.
22. The relief centres were offering clothes and basic items a family might need, however they did not offer anything someone my age would need.
23. I detailed in paragraph 34 of my IWS where I stayed on the first night and in paragraph 37 where I stayed for the next couple of weeks. In the days following the fire I was fasting because of Ramadan. I broke fast at my friend's house so my mum did not have to worry about me.

24. The hotel room we were provided was meant to be for two people but they added two extra beds. This meant my whole family; myself, my mum, my dad and my little sister had to sleep in one room. The room was so small I would avoid going there. I would get there just as I was ready to sleep in the early hours of the morning and I would leave as soon as soon as I woke up. I had difficulty sleeping. It was too much of a confined space. I was cycling around all day and night. I lost a lot of weight.
25. The hotel was located far from the rest of my family. I used to cycle back and forth to my aunt's house to get things for my family. I did not like the area the hotel was located in.
26. The staff at the hotel were nice and friendly.
27. I was living in the hotel full time for just over a year. It was not a home.

Food and Drink

28. I ate food at the hotel. It was mainly pizza and prawn sticks. It was not healthy and not food you should be eating every day. I missed eating home cooked Moroccan food. I got sick of eating the same food every day and this was part of the reason I lost so much weight.

Basic Provisions and Financial Assistance

29. My mum generally sorted any financial provisions. We asked for money for laundry and cabs, however, we did not receive it. We are confused why not as other people got it. I feel like I should have at least been given money to get a taxi to school or some form of transport, as I was moved further away from my school. When I was living in Grenfell I was round the corner from my school. Whilst I was staying in the hotel the journey took me about 45 minutes by moped, it would take longer by car. Public transport did not take me there directly, it would probably have taken an hour if I had got it. This affected my attendance and school work.
30. It would have been helpful to have got more money for clothes, shoes and a haircut. I felt like I looked homeless. I had lost all my clothes and we not given enough money to replace them straight away.

Psychological Support

31. I did not meet anyone official within the first 7 days. I was only given access to a CAMHs worker once my mum chased them up. No one contacted me until she sorted it out.
32. It would have been helpful for my mum to have been offered something relaxing such as a spa day or anything to help her. They should not have just left her in that hotel room stressing.

Coordination and Leadership

33. RBKC, TMO and the government were a mess. I could have organised things better than they did.

Adequacy of Response and Lessons Learned

34. We were left in a Premier Inn for a year and a half. It gets to a point where it is just a disrespect. My family were not valued. I do not know how they expected my mum to sort out all of this stuff when she had just lost her home family, but they did. They left us in a Premier Inn and my mum had to sort out everything herself. They did not support us. They just left us.
35. Since I have left Grenfell I have realised how bad it was there. If my mum had been in charge of that building there is no way that could have happened, they did not take into account any health and safety precautions. I think they felt just giving us a home was enough, they did not feel it needed suitable for us to live in. There were so many issues with Grenfell Tower, it was not a place that was safe for us. They shoved us in a tower block together and just saw us as the same type of person, they did not see us as individuals.

36. It is clear they do not care about us, they will never care about us. This was shown by the way we were treated when we were living at Grenfell Tower, the fire and the way we were treated after the fire.

37. **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 facts in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....*Z. Chebiouni*.....

Date.....*26/02/2020*.....

Zakariya Chebiouni