

**Witness Statement of: Zainu Deen**  
**No. of Statement: 1**  
**Exhibits: 1**  
**Date of Statement:**

## **GRENFALL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF MR ZAINU DEEN**

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I, ZAINU DEEN, of [REDACTED] will say as follows:

1. This statement relates to the tragic events on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 which took place at Grenfell Tower. I understand that this is being dealt within Phase 1 of the Inquiry and the other matters that I would like to comment upon in this statement are being dealt with in Phase 2 of the Inquiry.
2. I am the Father and Grandfather of Zainab Deen (D.O.B 25/5/1985) and Jerimiah Deen (D.O.B 4/12/2014) who lived at Flat 115 Grenfell Tower, W11 1TQ, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, and died in the fire at Grenfell Tower on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017.
3. I make this statement in support of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
4. I confirm that this is my first statement to the MPS/Inquiry.
5. I have been informed by my Solicitor that this statement will form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and will be published on the Inquiry's website.
6. I have also been made aware of the Inquiry's Phase 2 Redaction policy by my Solicitor.

#### **Previous Complaints/Warnings**

7. In respect of whether my daughter made me aware of any issues or defects relating to:
  - a. The lifts- My daughter did not mention any issues or defects with the same to me.
  - b. The flat doors, including self closing devices and smoke seals/strips-Zainab did not mention any issues or defects with the same to me.

- c. Communal doors throughout the building, including self closing devices, lack of handles, smoke seals/strips-Zainab did not mention any issues or defects with the same to me.
- d. Gaps around windows or windows not opening/closing properly-My daughter did not mention any issues or defects with the same to me. As far as I was aware the windows had been recently installed, but I am not sure of the exact date that they were put in.
- e. Kitchen Extractor fans-My daughter did not mention any specific issues or difficulties with the Kitchen Extractor fan.
- f. Fire Safety Signage (stay put signs)-Zainab did not mention any specific issues or difficulties with the Fire Safety signage to me.
- g. Floor number after refurbishment in the communal hallways and stair cases-Whilst I understand on some of the floors the numbering was obscured by the emergency lighting being installed over the top of it, Zainab did not raise any specific complaints or issues to me about this.
- h. Escape Routes being blocked-My daughter did not mention any specific issues or difficulties with this issue. My understanding is that each floor had their own room for the rubbish and refuse to be put into before it all got taken away by the binmen. Zainab did not mention any problems about rubbish/refuse bags blocking any exits.
- i. Emergency lighting in the communal halls and staircase-My daughter did not mention any specific issues or problems with this issue to me.
- j. Communal Smoke Control or ventilation system-My daughter did not mention any issues or concerns about this issue to me.
- k. Smoke alarms in the flat-I had not ever been insider my daughter's flat so cannot comment upon the smoke alarms in the flat, though my daughter did not raise any issues or problems about the smoke alarms with me.
- l. Gas Pipe Work/boxing in-my daughter did not mention any issues or defects with the same to me.

#### **Fire Safety Complaints**

- 8. I do not know if Zainab had any concerns about the fire safety at Grenfell Tower and whether she even raised the same to RBKC/the TMO/Rydon, or if she did have concerns when these were raised and whether they were orally or in writing.
- 9. Zainab did not mention any fire safety issues to me when we spoke to each other.
- 10. I do not know if any of her neighbours at Grenfell Tower made any complaints about fire safety, or if they did, who they made the complaints to, when they did so and whether it was in writing or orally.
- 11. I am also unaware, if RBKC/the TMO/Rydon acted on any fire safety complaints that Zainab, or any of her neighbours, may have made to them.

12. I was not aware of any fire safety checks and/or inspections undertaken at Grenfell Tower/the Walkways and Zainab never mentioned these to me.

#### **Complaints of Disrepair**

13. Zainab did not mention to me any issues with disrepair in her flat-be it with any leaks, damp/mould, pest infestations whenever I spoke with her.
14. If Zainab did have such difficulties then I do not know when they occurred or even how long they lasted for.
15. If Zainab did have any disrepair issues with the flat then I assume that she would have raised the same with RBKC/TMO but, if she did raise these issues, then I do not have any knowledge of when these difficulties were reported or even if they were in writing or orally.
16. I have no knowledge whether, if Zainab had lodged complaints, the complaints were effectively dealt with. Zainab did not mention to me any ongoing disrepair issues that she was experiencing.

#### **Fire Safety Advice**

17. As I did not live at Grenfell Tower, I was not aware of the "Stay Put" strategy until after the fire at the Tower and only learnt about it from the media and the information when came out from the subsequent investigations and Phase 1 of the Inquiry. I do not know if the "Stay Put" Strategy was ever communicated to Zainab.
18. Although Zainab was born in Sierra Leone, she spoke English very well and would not have needed any translation or assistance in obtaining the advice.

#### **Resident Communications**

19. As far as I am aware, Zainab was not a member of, or engaged with, the following residents' organisations:
- a. The Grenfell Compact
  - b. The Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association
  - c. The Lancaster West Residents' Association
  - d. The Lancaster West Estate Management Board
20. I do not know of any concerns that Zainab had with the position of the Heating Interface Unit (HIU) in her flat. I do not know when it was installed by Rydon and whether Zainab had asked for the HIU to be installed elsewhere or whether she was satisfied with the way Rydon and The TMO approached this.

### **Power Surges 2013**

21. I have no recollection of Zainab ever complaining to me about any Power Surges when she moved into the flat. I believe Zainab moved into the flat at some point in 2015 and would not have known about any Power Surge Issues in 2013.
22. If there had been any ongoing Power Surge issues then I am unaware if Zainab had raised her concerns with the TMO, RBKC or the London Fire Brigade.
23. I do not know what response was received to any concerns raised.

### **Consultation Process Regarding Refurbishment**

24. I do not know if Zainab participated with the Consultation Process of procuring the main contractor for the refurbishment (Rydon). I do not know what Zainab's view of this would have been and how she would have responded to the choice of Rydon-she never mentioned anything to me about Rydon.
25. I do not know if Zainab was involved with the consultation process regarding the refurbishment works (including the decision whether to refurbish Grenfell Tower, choice of windows or cladding). She never mentioned any of this to me.
26. I have no knowledge if Zainab attended any meetings in relation to any such consultation process, whether she received resident newsletters from the TMO/Rydon or how much weight she placed in the contents of the newsletters. I do not know if she had any input into this and whether her points were heard/noted. I do not recall her ever saying that she was involved in any consultation related meetings.

### **Concerns during the refurbishment works**

27. Zainab did not mention any concerns that she had about the refurbishment works when she spoke with me.
28. If Zainab had any concerns then I am unaware of what these were or when they were raised or to whom they were raised or what response she received.

### **Disability/PEEP issues**

29. Zainab and Jerimiah were not disabled or had any particular health issues that they would have needed to have informed the Local Authority about and require a subsequent OT/Social Services Assessment.
30. I am not 100% sure if Zainab informed RBKC of the change in her household as she had had a child. I assume that she did inform RBKC of the change in household as I think Zainab moved into the flat when she was either pregnant with, or had just given birth to her Son.
31. I would also assume that Zainab would have informed RBKC of her family make up when applying for housing benefit, though I was not involved in helping her with this application.
32. Given that Zainab's first language was English, she would not have needed an interpreter when meeting with RBKC.

### **Aftermath**

33. With regards to issues in respect of the immediate aftermath of the fire, I did not need any actual emergency accommodation or housing as I did not live in the Tower. However, I did require, and received, additional help and support with my needs at the time.

### **Financial Assistance**

34. The only emergency financial assistance that I received from RBKC was £20,000 which was for the funeral costs for Zainab and her son. I received no other financial assistance from RBKC following the fire and the deaths of Zainab and her son.

### **Psychological Support**

35. I was offered mental health support from the Red Cross in the form of counselling services. This help was provided straight away and I was initially put in touch with the Red Cross by RBKC who gave me a contact number for them.
36. The Red Cross attended Zainab and her son's funeral and spoke a lot with myself and my family. They were based at hotel in Central London and we could just drop in for counselling

and talk for as long as we needed to. It was a very emotional time for myself and my family and the Red Cross were of great help and support to us.

37. I believe that the Red Cross provided support for about 6 months or so and then they passed us onto Victim Support in early 2018. They came to my home in Erith to provide more counselling, and this was also very helpful. Victim Support helped me for about a year or so and I last used them in late 2018/early 2019.

#### **Information and Assistance**

38. In the aftermath of the fire, my family and I were out in touch by RBKC with Family Liaison Officers, PC's Sally Robinson and Adele Fox and they were very helpful and made sure that our needs were met as much as possible. They arranged for taxi's to take us to/from Erith, where I live, to the Tower.
39. The Family Liaison Officers helped with finding the bodies and the DNA testing to identify the same. They were brilliant at keeping us informed of what was going on, especially if it was an issue which would be in the media and we would be briefed in advance of the story breaking.

#### **Public Communications**

40. In terms of how information about how services and support were communicated to me, my experiences with the different mediums are as follows:
- i. Online (Social Media/Websites)- I did not receive any information this way
  - ii. Leaflets/Newsletters- RBKC sent newsletters/leaflets to me and I still receive the same, about various services that were available to me.
  - iii. Telephone Helpline-I did try phoning the helpline and left my details on a few occasions but I never received a call back and I found this very stressful, frustrating and unhelpful.
  - iv. Voluntary Relief Centres-I did not have any need to use the Relief Centres

#### **Voluntary and Community Groups**

41. The only voluntary group that I used and had experience of was the Red Cross. As set out above, they provide my family and I with counselling services and were very helpful to us.



42. My family and I did not receive any donations or offers of assistance from the public.

#### **Coordination and Leadership**

43. Initially, following the fire, we all attended various public meetings with RBKC/the TMO. Everyone who attended on behalf of the families affected by the fire, including myself, were already very emotional and angry, but the meetings did nothing to reassure or calm us down. In fact we all became even more frustrated, emotional and angrier following the meetings and we just did not get the answers or help from RBKC that we wanted and needed. It always felt like another fight with them and we were just not getting anywhere with them.

44. Eventually, I just stopped going to the meetings as I would be getting more and more frustrated by what went on and the lack of action and answers. I realised that I could do nothing to bring my daughter and grandson back and no matter how angry I (and the other families) became, nothing seemed to change with RBKC.

45. RBKC seemed to make a lot of empty promises and never seemed to fully deliver upon them. For example, in December 2018 a Director from RBKC met at my home and promised that they would provide funds for a holiday for my family and I. However, when it came to booking the holiday, another Director from RBKC said that they would only pay for the tickets and not for any other costs of the holiday such as hotel, transfers or spending money.

46. Overall, I was very disappointed with the leadership of RBKC, as well as the TMO, as meeting with them would make me even more angrier and frustrated then ever and all they ever made were empty promises and would never properly follow through with them. It was always a fight with them and that was the last thing my family and I needed at the time given what we had just been through.

47. When the Government stepped into help, this made no real difference to things for myself and the families. We got no answers and did not see any action being taken. I did not feel that they were helping and it seemed to me that they were just paying lip service to the families through the media, but in reality, nothing changed on the ground level.


#### **Adequacy of response and Lessons Learned**

48. The only real help that I received was from the Red Cross and the Family Liaison Offices. I cannot say whether the rest of the help that we received was enough or not enough. We got

what we thought we needed at the time, such as the funds to pay for the funerals, but there was no one else there to guide us to what other help, services or funds that we would have been entitled to.

49. In terms of what lessons can be learned, I would certainly say that the forms of communication used by RBKC/the TMO/Government could and should be better. For instance, we were initially given a helpline number and told to call this if we had been affected by or had family/friends in the fire. However I called this helpline on a number of occasions and was only every able to leave a message. I did not receive a call back from them and this meant that I had to ring round a number of other numbers in order to find someone who could help me. This was the last thing I needed given how difficult and stressful everything was at the time.
50. I think if a disaster like this was to ever happen again, then a central number needs to be set up where every call and message is logged and rung back to make sure the caller is contacted and checked upon to see if they are ok, if they have everything they need for the moment or to put them in touch with the right services that can help them.
51. What also would help is actual proper action to be taken at ground level so that the public needs can be listened to, identified and properly addressed, rather than frustrate people and get them even more angrier by not listening to them and not following through on promises.
52. If proper action at ground level is taken, and the peoples immediate needs are actually addressed and swiftly dealt with, then this will really help victims of a disaster deal much better with the stress of the situation.
53. The victims and their families should not ignored and must be listened to at all times and I hope that this point is made clear to the Government and RBKC/the TMO.
54. This approach should be taken by both the local Council involved as well at the Government and should be more than just getting the right media angle or using the disaster for political points scoring.

**I believe the facts contained in this Witness Statement to be true**

Signed.......... (Zainu Deen)

Dated this 14 day of February 2020