

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: O-CONNOR, EMMA LOUISE

Age if under 18: OVER 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation:

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This statement (consisting of page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: E L O-CONNOR

Date: 21/06/2017

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

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I have lived at Grenfell Towers, Grenfell Road, West London W11 1TQ since 2012. I live with my partner Luke TOWNER (DOB [REDACTED]) and we lived in flat 171, which is on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor. Our floor consists of six flats numbered from 171-176 and the occupants of the flats are as follows:

172 – Has three adult occupants, an elderly female, and one male and one female who I would say are aged in their 20's.

173 – Four occupants, a female called Mary and her daughter Kadesha, who I have been told have both died. I do not think that the other two occupants were present at the time of the fire.

174 – A black male aged in his 30-40's and I have seen this male at Portobello Rugby Club a few days after the fire.

175 – Five occupants, of which I have been told that two, a mother and daughter are dead. I do not know about the other three people.

176 – A family of 4 or 5, consisting of two adults, a male and female and 2 or 3 children. I saw the male outside during the fire but I do not know what happened to the others.

Generally Luke and I keep each other to ourselves as we are not very sociable so I do not know many of the occupants of the tower but I do have another friend who I know as Steve POWERS, a male in his 50's who lived on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, but I have been told that he is one of the confirmed dead. I also know that one of the residents of the 19<sup>th</sup> floor survived. I do not know his name but he had a dog and his wife was in hospital being treated for her injuries.

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As I said earlier I together with Luke have lived at Grenfell Towers since 2012 and we rent the flat from the Tenant Management Organisation (T.M.O). I believe that most of the residents rent their flats from T.M.O, but some have probably bought theirs.

In order to get into the flats there is an entrance that has two doors at the front of the building. Entry is made via a key fob or by pressing a buzzer to the flat number that you require. There are two lifts on the property which are accessible to all floors although one is often out of use, and there is also a central staircase. I have seen a fire extinguisher on the ground floor but not on any other floors, and there are fire hoses situated on each floor beside the lift area, but they are always locked and I am not aware of any keys in order to access them.

I do know that there is a fire exit on the roof, but the door to this exit was padlocked and therefore has not been accessible. As far as I know all of the flats in the property have internal smoke alarms. Our flat which has a bedroom, living room, hallway, kitchen and toilet/bathroom, has a smoke alarm in both the hallway and kitchen which are connected so that if one goes off the other one is automatically activated. These smoke alarms were recently updated during the building renovations of the last couple of years. Carbon monoxide detectors were also issued and ours was in the kitchen. Outside of the flats there were smoke detectors by the lifts on each floor, but these never went off and I had heard that they had been switched off by T.M.O. as a result of the gas works that began earlier this year. These renovations were still ongoing at the time of the fire last week, but I think that they were close to completion as the boxing in of the pipes had began. There were no sprinklers at all within the building but I do know that there were air vents on every floor on both sides of the lift. I cannot recall at any stage during the time I have lived in my flat being contacted by T.M.O. regarding any safety or fire guidelines or regulations and major renovations work concerning the external walls of the building began in September 2014.

At the time, T.M.O. did not inform or consult us or any other occupants about this and the renovations work consisted at the installation of cladding on the outside of the building and also a new heating and hot water system. I know that there were two or three companies involved in the renovation works and it took a lot longer than originally anticipated around three years in total to complete. No-one from T.M.O. updated us with regards to the renovations and I recall receiving letters from the residents association expressing concern over the works both at the beginning and during, but neither I nor Luke attended any of the meetings.

Last Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017 both Luke and I were at home during the day. I am disabled and find getting out and about difficult, and Luke is my full time carer. Sometime during the early part of the evening we

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had a takeaway delivered to us and everything seemed normal. I was probably watching television and Luke would probably been on his computer. Sometime shortly after midnight we both went to bed, but a short time later heard the sound of sirens. Luke got up and looked out of the window and informed me that there was a fire in the flat below as he could see the reflection from the school opposite. We could see the reflection increase, and Luke leant out of our window and could see fire coming out of the window at one of the flats a number of floors below. By now neither of us could sleep and so we decided to go downstairs to watch. We both got dressed and went down in the lift to the ground floor. I recall that one of the lifts wasn't working. As we went down, The life stopped on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor where two females wearing headscarfs got in. It also stopped on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and when the door opened a woman was running about shouting 'Fire' and alerting people. I did not recognise the lady and she did not get into the lift.

Luke and I then went outside of the building and sat on a bench and watched the fire which I could see was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, but was very quickly rising up on the outside of the block and setting fire to the the cladding which has only recently been installed. I could now see that the whole block was engulfed in flames and it was at this point that I began to cry and go into shock and as such Luke took me to my mums address, which is about a ten to fifteen minute walk away in Nursery Lane. When we arrived I continued to watch what was happening on television and could see that it was turning into a major disaster.

As a result of the fire both Luke and I have lost all of our belongings as we left the flat with just our clothes. We are now staying at the Mercore Hotel in Kensington and we are due to stay her until 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017. I do not know where we will go then, and do not know what lies ahead for us both. I am sure that I have not fully relased the extent of what has happened and have difficulty in sleeping and am suffering with survivors guilt. I do intend to visit my doctor and I have been given a self referral form, which I fully intend to use at some point when things have settled down.

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