

**Witness Statement of: Ahmad Al Sadi**

**No. of statement: 1**

**Exhibits: 2**

**Date of statement: 02.06.2018**

## **GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF AHMAD AL SADI**

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I, AHMAD AL SADI, will say as follows:-

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. This statement is for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. I wish to make a further statement as part of Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

#### Background

2. I live in flat [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk with my wife Fatima Al Sadi, and our four children [REDACTED]. We moved into Hurstway Walk on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2016. We previously lived in Trellik Tower. The council offered us [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk as permanent accommodation, which is why we moved.
3. I was born in Syria and I moved to the UK several years ago. I work as [REDACTED] driver.

#### The community

4. My wife knows many people who live in the community, including people who used to live in Grenfell Tower. Our children went to school in the area and my wife knew families through the school. My children went to school

with children who lived in Grenfell Tower. The Tower is close to where our home is and we would see it every day.

14<sup>th</sup> June 2017

5. On the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> June I had come back home after a full day working, to have Iftar (break fast) with my family. After Iftar my wife and children went to bed. I was sitting alone in our living room. It was between 12:30am and 1am when I remember hearing a helicopter in the sky, but I thought it was probably just the police and it was nothing to worry about. The landline phone started ringing. I picked up the phone and it was our neighbour Eman [REDACTED] [REDACTED] She told me that Grenfell Tower was on fire and said that I should be careful. She told me to wake up my family and be on stand-by in case the fire spread.
6. I put down the phone and quickly put on my jacket and went outside to see what was happening. I didn't wake my family up because I didn't want to scare them. I wanted to check what the fire was like first.
7. As soon as I went outside I saw people wrapped up in blankets coming from the direction of Grenfell Walk and the Tower. I also saw a couple of police officers but I can't say exactly how many. It was now around 1.15am. I stood near the bus stop outside Latimer Road underground station, between Latimer Road and Hurstway Walk on the end closest to the Tower. I could hear people screaming inside the Tower and I could see dark smoke coming off the Tower and the shadow of a fire from the other side of the building. I could only see a few flames on the side of the building I was facing. I could see that most of the people in the Tower still had their lights turned on so I thought that they must have been awake. I thought at the time that they must be evacuating the building. I wanted to help get people out of the Tower, but the police officers were telling people to stand back and they wouldn't let me anywhere near the building to help.

8. I stood outside watching the Tower for about fifteen minutes. Whilst I was outside I saw a fire engines arrive. The fire brigade couldn't get their fire engine near the Tower because Bramley Road was closed. After a few minutes I saw firefighters come out of the fire engine on foot from the direction of Bramley Road, I remember watching one firefighter trying to get the stand pipe open. He looked very confused and didn't seem to me to know what he was doing.
9. I felt useless so I didn't want to stand there any longer. I couldn't see any fire on the side of the Tower where I was standing, by Latimer Road underground station. I think that this is the West side of the Tower. When I saw the firefighters I thought to myself that the fire brigade had finally come and everything would be okay. I kept thinking about the fire in a similar building in Shepherd's Bush three months earlier, where the fire brigade managed to put the fire out in a tower block quickly and it had only spread to three floors. I thought at the time that the same thing was going to happen with Grenfell Tower. I thought that it might spread to two or three floors but they would have evacuated everyone by then and the fire would be put out quickly.
10. I went back into my flat at around 1:30am. My wife and two eldest daughters were awake. I think our neighbour Eman had called my wife on her mobile after I left and told her about the fire. My wife kept saying that she wanted to go outside and see what was happening, I didn't want her to go out there because I was worried about her safety and I wanted our family to stay inside the flat until it was over.
11. My wife went outside after 1:30am. I stayed at home with the children and I prayed Fajr prayers with my daughters. My wife came back into the flat at around 1:45am. She was in shock. I could not understand at the time why. My wife showed me a video of the fire which she had just taken. It was not the same fire I had seen fifteen minutes earlier, it was so different. The fire had spread all over the building including on the side of the building which I had been watching earlier. I did not expect to see that. My mind immediately went

to 9/11. I remembered how the building collapsed and I thought the same thing would happen with the Tower.

12. Our eldest daughter kept insisting that she wanted to go out and see what was happening, so my wife went out with her for a couple of minutes and then they came back in. [REDACTED] kept saying that it was going to become a big fire and we needed to get out. She was worried about the fire spreading.
13. I had to get my children out of the flat as quickly as possible because I was worried about the fire spreading. I knew that if we had to leave the flat the most important thing for us to take was our ID, in case we had to be able to prove that we are who we are. I quickly grabbed our passports, some pyjamas for the children, my credit card and house keys. We tried not to scare the children; we kept telling them that everything was going to be fine. We put our youngest child in his pushchair and left the flat at around 2am.
14. We exited our building through the main entrance to Hurstway Walk and stood with all of our neighbours outside. I looked up at the Tower and the fire was so bright it was glowing. I couldn't see any of the lights in the windows of the Tower anymore, which I had seen earlier when I was outside. I could hear this hissing noise coming from the outside of the Tower and you could hear people screaming inside. I could also smell the Tower burning. I was in such shock that I just stood there. I couldn't even think about my wife or children or what they must be thinking or feeling. I couldn't look away. I'm not sure how long I was standing there for. I couldn't believe what I was seeing.
15. At some point my wife decided that we should take the children to our neighbour Eman's flat. For hours I would come and go between Eman's flat to check on the children and standing at the main entrance to Hurstway Walk where I was watching the fire. I wasn't speaking to anyone, I was just watching. I couldn't understand how the fire had become so bad. I've always thought that the UK is known for being great with health and safety, and from my experience the fire brigade have always managed to put out fires quickly. I

am originally from Syria and so for years I have been watching the war on the news, I've seen videos of whole cities destroyed but none of it compared to seeing Grenfell Tower in person.

16. At around 2.45am I heard a fire alarm from the Tower. This was the first time I heard a fire alarm from inside the Tower. I was surprised I had not heard a fire alarm before this. I saw people running from the Tower so I hoped that a lot of the residents had managed to escape.
17. I exhibit to this statement two videos of the Tower which my wife took that night and later sent to me, one at 3.27am (**Exhibit AA/1**) and another at 3.52AM (**Exhibit AA/2**).
18. At around 4.10am I remember hearing several explosions from inside the Tower and the flames on the building turned blue. The news reporters and cameramen also started showing up at around this time.
19. I remember seeing at around 5am a few men in jalabiyas were going around handing out food and water to people standing outside. At around 6am I felt exhausted, as I had been up for 24 hours and I needed to get some rest. My wife and daughters wanted to stay outside. I went back into our flat. I got in and I turned on the news on our television. I was watching all the coverage of the fire and replying to messages from family and friends who knew we lived near the Tower and were worried about us. I can see on my phone that I sent a friend a message at 6.06am telling him that I think they had evacuated everyone from the Tower.
20. At around 7am or 7:30am, my wife and children came back in to the flat. My daughters were crying and they were so scared because they all had friends who lived in the Tower. My wife had friends who lived in the Tower and they were missing.
21. We knew that some of the flats in the Walks were evacuated, and that most people went to St Clement Church and the Sports Centre, but I didn't want to

scare my children any more than they already were, I thought it was best that we stay in our home where everything was familiar to them and we could be together.

22. I remember that our entire building was empty. You couldn't hear anything from the hallways, whereas you usually hear people talking and children playing. I think we were one of maybe a few families who came back into the building after the fire.

23. I remember that later on in the day on 14<sup>th</sup> June, police officers came and stood outside every entrance to our building. They weren't letting anyone into the building through the side entrance. My wife and I started to become worried. I thought maybe they had evacuated our building and they had forgotten to tell us. I went out and asked the police officer what was happening and was there something we should know about. I asked her if the Tower was going to collapse and was it okay for us to be in the building. The police officer said that everything was okay and that an engineer had checked the Tower and said that it wasn't going to collapse.

24. I remember that the hot water had been turned off in our building but we still had gas and electricity.

25. My daughters were terrified and they didn't want to sleep in their rooms. They didn't feel safe. My wife and I were trying to make them feel better and we told them that everything was okay. We bought all of our mattresses in to the living room and we all slept together on the night of 14 June.

#### Aftermath

26. We found out some time after 14<sup>th</sup> June that that my son's best friend Zainab died in the Tower, with his mother Nadia who was also a Teaching Assistant in their school and a close friend of my wife's. Nadia was a parent and a teaching assistant at our children's school. My wife became very close with Nadia. They would both go on school trips to help look after the children.

27. My wife was familiar with twenty-five of the deceased. She was good friends with Rania Ibrahim, whom she first met whilst they were both attending an English course at the Westway Centre. We found out some time later that Rania had died in the fire.
28. Fawzia El-Wahabi was the aunt of one of our neighbours in Trelik Tower. She used to visit Trelik Tower often when we lived there and so my wife and her became very familiar with each other. Fawzia was one of the few people we knew in the community when we first moved into Hurstway Walk.
29. We stayed in our flat for three nights. I wasn't able to go to work throughout that time as I was in shock.
30. I remember that on either the second or third day someone from the gas company came to the flat to check our meter and told us that we shouldn't use our gas. We stopped using the gas from then on. We also didn't have hot water in the flat. I went to the Leisure Centre on 17<sup>th</sup> June to use their showers. I had to go in and explain that I was from Hurstway Walk and that we didn't have any hot water.
31. My wife is very sociable, she has a lot of friends in the community and she quickly found out from other friends that you could go to the Westway sports centre for information and to ask to be placed in a hotel room, but we still didn't want to leave our flat because we thought it was best for the children if we stayed in our home.
32. I went back to work on 17 June because I couldn't afford not to. I had to pay car insurance and support my family.
33. We stayed in our flat and tried to live life as normal as we could. We were still in shock. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June, the alarm which I had been told had been put in around the Tower to monitor any shifts or movement from the Tower, went off. I was at home when I heard the alarm. My wife and children were outside

the flat and they were near the area when they heard the alarm go off. I went outside to join them and to help my wife to try and calm the children down. My daughters kept screaming “I don’t want to die, I don’t want to die” They believed that the Tower was going to collapse and didn’t want to come anywhere near our flat. I wanted to convince them to come back into our home but they all refused, including my wife. They thought it was too dangerous to stay in Hurstway Walk.

34. We all went to the Westway sports centre and spoke to a woman who worked for the council. I explained that my family were too scared to go back home because of how close our home was to the Tower. We also did not have hot water and we couldn’t use the gas. The council arranged for us to stay in a hotel in West London. We stayed there for a month.
35. When we returned to our flat, the children were really upset at being back and were struggling with being so close to the Tower. There were photographs of the people who had died in the Tower around Hurstway Walk and this upset my children. My wife and I knew that we had to leave again because of the effect it was having on the children. We had to move into another hotel in West London in September 2017. Living in a hotel was difficult. The rooms were small and the children had to then travel a long way to get to school.
36. I don’t want to go into detail about the effects that the fire has had on me and my family. The impact thought on us has been serious. My wife registered my children for counselling and they are still having counselling. My wife also has counselling.
37. I don’t feel that I can go to counselling, as I have to appear strong for my family but inside my heart is crying, every time I step out of our building each morning I see the Tower and say “Astakhfarallah” (God forgive in Arabic) and turn my head. I wish they would cover it up. I have started having flashbacks from the night.



38. I'm having a really difficult time now that its coming up to Ramadan, my whole family is. Last year we put up lights and decorations and made it very festive for the children. We don't think we can do that this year. We don't think we can celebrate anything during that time of year again not even Eid.

39. As its now Ramadan again I'm having more flashbacks and the worst feelings, I'm remembering everything again.

**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 for it to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ahmad', written over a horizontal line.

Dated:

2/6/2018