

**Witness Statement of: Cesar Ranito**  
**No. of statement: 1**  
**Exhibits: 4**  
**Date of statement: 18.05.18**

## **GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF CESAR RANITO**

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I, CESAR RANITO, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement about the events that took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I wish to give a further statement for Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

#### Background

2. I moved into [REDACTED] Testerton Walk in April 2001. The property is a three bedroom maisonette. I lived there with my wife, Isabel Ranito. We have two kids, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They moved to [REDACTED] to study in 2011.
3. The property overlooks the community gardens. You cannot easily see Grenfell Tower from the property. If you are on the balcony and you really lean out, you can see a small section of the Tower. The main entrance to Testerton Walk we always used is very close to the Tower.
4. I work as a [REDACTED] I have worked there for 19 years.

#### 14 June

5. It was in the early morning on 14 June 2017 when I was on my way home from a shift at work. I parked our car on Whitchurch Street before making my way through

Testerton Walk. I didn't see or hear anything unusual at this point. When I got to the flat, my wife was watching TV in the sitting room. Isabel always waits up for me when I am coming home late from work. It was around 12.30am - 12.50am when I got home.

6. I sat down next to my wife but after only a few minutes I noticed a smell of smoke. It was a very strong smell and I didn't think it was coming from inside the flat so I went to the balcony to find out where the smell was coming from. It was the smell of burning plastic. It was a very distinctive smell. Out on the balcony I could hear the sound of people screaming. We cannot see Grenfell Tower properly from our balcony. If you really crane your neck you can see part of the Tower. I couldn't see anything happening but I later found out that the fire had not spread to the part of the Tower we could see from our balcony. I couldn't see a fire but I could smell it and I could hear people shouting 'help' and 'fire'. It was late so Isabel was in her night clothes. I told her to get dressed and said that I would go outside to find out what was happening.
7. As I opened the door to my flat to leave, there were two other neighbours just outside. We all went out together through the front of Testerton walk, through the fire exit which takes you out onto Grenfell Walk. I went to the right towards Barandon Walk. From there I could see that Grenfell Tower was on fire. The fire was on one side near the bottom of the building at around the fourth floor. There were bright orange and red flames. I was completely shocked by what I was witnessing.
8. I was only out there for two to three minutes before I ran back to get my wife. As I went I was knocking on the doors of my neighbours to let them know that there was a fire. Lots of other people were doing that too. The people who were already awake and knew about the fire were letting other people know about it. I ran into our flat shouting that there was a fire and that we needed to leave. My wife was dressed and ready to go. I grabbed my phone and keys and then we left. I was only back in the flat for a couple of minutes. We were in such a hurry to leave we left the windows on the first floor open.
9. We exited through the same exit I has used earlier and went back to the same spot I had been in previously. There were around 20 other people who were stood with us. Other people kept coming out of the blocks to see the fire before running back inside to get

their families. The people who were outside with us were screaming and shouting. We were trying to let the people in the Tower know what was going on. We were shouting that there was a fire and for people to get out. There were also lots of people by the entrance of Grenfell Tower screaming too. I didn't know if they were people who had gotten out of the Tower or if it was people who had families inside.

10. There were people inside the Tower screaming for help. There were people at the windows waving their phones which were lit up. There was a constant sound of fire alarms going off from inside the Tower. It was chaos. I took a photo of the Tower at 1.30am. I can't remember now if I took the photo earlier when I was on my own or if it was when Isabel was me. This photo is exhibited at Exhibit **CR/1**.
11. I could only see one fire engine in the area. There were firefighters by the Tower doing what they could to combat the fire. Some of them were spraying water on the Tower but it didn't seem to be having any effect at all. The flames just kept going as though the water was nothing. I knew that there was no way for the water to reach the upper part of the Tower and the fire was already spreading higher. Even the firefighters looked completely shocked at what they were facing.
12. I then heard a massive bang and there was a sudden explosion of blue flames from the Tower. I could hear and see windows breaking in the flats. I could see debris dropping from the Tower. There were chunks of cladding falling off of the tower. They were still on fire as they fell. There was also other material coming off the Tower. It looked like the insulation material that had been on the cladding. It was flaming and falling fast. When I saw huge bits of cladding and hinges falling off of the Tower, I was actually scared that the building might completely collapse. The fire was also shooting up and around the side of the building. It moved so fast, it was like there was petrol on the building.
13. We were outside watching the Tower for around 15 minutes. However I started to really panic as the flaming chunks of cladding were coming down. I thought it was too dangerous to stay so close to the Tower. I grabbed my wife and we ran further away from the Tower, along Grenfell Walk to the side near Hurstway Walk. There were people at the windows of the flats on that side of the Tower, which faces Latimer Road Station, asking the crowd what was going on. The fire hadn't reached that side of the

building yet. We were warning people in the flat shouting 'there's a fire! There's a fire!' There were firefighters using megaphones telling people to stay put. They were telling people to stay in their homes. I could not understand why they were telling them to stay inside. I could see the fire spreading towards them.

14. There was a lot of black smoke coming off of the Tower. It was starting to become overwhelming and I was finding it hard to breathe. We decided to go towards Latimer Road Station. There were a lot of people there watching the Tower. We stayed there for hours. I think there were around 200 people standing there with us. There were people who had been evacuated from the Tower but also people from the local area who had found out what was happening. There were people in the crowd screaming and crying. Every time a police officer or firefighter was nearby, there would be people telling them 'please hurry, there's people inside'.
15. As we were stood there watching the Tower, I looked up and I saw a family who I think were at the very top of the Tower on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. It looked like there were two adults and two kids. I will never forget the image of them. I felt like I was watching them for an hour but it was only minutes. They were waving something. I'm not sure what it was. My wife thought it was a mop. All the flats around them were on fire. I could see the fire getting closer and closer to their flat and then I saw the fire go from the outside in. After that they disappeared and we couldn't see them anymore. I know that they must have died but I want to believe that they were saved by the firefighters somehow. There were other people we could see at the windows of their flats, screaming for help. Eventually we couldn't see anyone anymore and after a while all the screaming from the Tower stopped. The Tower was looked like it was completely engulfed in flames. It was truly horrific.
16. I couldn't see any fire engines on the ramp way in between Latimer Road Station and Hurstway Road. There was no way they would have been able to fit down that ramp as it was too narrow and there were bollards too. There was nothing I could do to help. It was awful just watching. We stayed near Latimer Road most of the time. At one point we did walk around to the other side of the Tower. All of the streets around the Tower were just full of fire engines and ambulances. I had never seen so many in my life.

17. As it became daylight, my wife and I walked to Whitchurch Road which is at the back of our block. My wife sat down on the bench and had some water. We walked over and stood by the green area in between Barandon Walk and Testerton Walk. At around 4.30am I took a photo of the tower. This photo is exhibited at Exhibit CR/2. It was light at this point but the Tower was still on fire. It was covered in grey smoke. There were lots of journalists and local people stood on the green with us. I think everyone was in shock. My wife was asked if she would speak to a journalist from Sweden and she briefly answered some questions on video.

18. Suddenly, at around 7.30am people started shouting that someone was still in the Tower and that they could see him. A journalist used his telescopic lens to zoom in and said it was a [REDACTED] looking man who kept coming to the window waving a towel and then moving away from the window again. He was at one of the lower floors of the Tower that had not burned. I think he must have slept through the fire. We later learned that he was rescued.

19. My wife needed to go back into our flat to collect her medication [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The police had blocked off the entrance of the walkway so that we couldn't get in to our flat. My wife managed to persuade the police officer to agree to let her go and get her medication from the flat.

20. At around 8am, the officer escorted us into the flat. I came inside into the Walkway but waited by the entrance as the police officer and my wife walked up to the flat. All I could see in the long passageway was rubbish and debris from the Tower and water on the floor. The water soaked my feet a little. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My wife came out of the flat with her medication and we quickly left.

21. At around 10am, we walked over to St Clements Church. So many people had brought

supplies of food, water and toiletries. I was amazed by the community spirit of the people who were donating supplies. I took a photo of the inside of the church at 10.15am. This photo is exhibited at Exhibit **CR/4**. My wife and I sat down and had a cup of tea and a sandwich. It was the first time we had eaten since the night before.

#### Aftermath

22. The day after the fire, I was coughing a lot. I think this was due to the smoke I had breathed in during the night of the fire. There had been a lot of smoke in the air.
23. I went back to the flat a few days after the fire to go and pick up some post. When I went in to the building I could still smell smoke. I opened the balcony and there were bits of plastic and sponge on my balcony. It was black and burnt. They were quite big bits too - almost the size of a tennis ball.
24. I then went back to the flat about three weeks later with my wife to water the plants on the balcony. I sat down on the sofa to relax and watch TV. I almost started to fall asleep when I suddenly heard lots of people screaming 'fire, fire!' I opened the door and there was smoke in the hallway. There was a fire in one of the flats on the Walkway. It got put out quickly but it was really frightening experience in light of what we had already experienced.
25. I don't want to return to our flat in Testerton Walk even though we had lived there for 16 years. There were also lots of issues with the gas, electricity and water supplies to the Walkways following the fire. The main reason we cannot return though is that my wife is still very traumatised by what happened on the night of the fire. We would not

feel secure in that property anymore. We have been living in temporary accommodation since the fire.

26. My wife and I didn't know anyone well from the Tower who lost their lives. However having lived in the community for so long we recognised many of the people who died in the Tower. Even if we did not know their names, these were people that we had seen around the Estate all the time. It was shocking to see their faces on the news and to find out that they had died in the Tower. One face I recognised was that of the young Colombian girl Jessica Urbano Ramirez who died in the Tower. I had often seen her around the Estate with her family.

#### Impact

27. Things have never been the same since the fire. I don't sleep as well anymore and I have put on weight because of the stress since the fire. I used to run twice a week and was always fit but since the fire I don't run anymore. I really lack motivation to do any exercise now. I don't want to socialise as much as I used too before the fire. My wife and I live a very quiet life now and we don't like seeing people as much as we did before. What I saw on the night of the fire and what happened to people in the Tower has had a big impact on my life and my wife's.
28. We currently live in temporary accommodation in [REDACTED]. We are council tenants among well-off private tenants. We do not feel very welcome there. At first I used to say good morning to my neighbours but they didn't reply so I stopped. It is different from living on the Estate which was more of a community. People were friendly on the Estate and would say hello and good morning to each other.
29. Following the fire my wife has had a really difficult time and it upsets me to see her unwell.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I have changed since the fire. I feel very anxious now.

30. My children were supposed to come back and stay at our home a month after the fire but they couldn't come because of the fire so they came to visit us in November. They were very scared when they heard about the fire. They called us up early that morning on the 14 June to find out if we were ok and find out what had happened.

31. I wish to make a further statement to be used as evidence in Phase 2 and I will describe in this statement more about the impact and what happened after the fire.

**Statement of truth**

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

Signed: 

Dated:  
18-05-2018