

Witness Statement of:	Fadumo Ahmed
No. of statement:	1
Exhibits:	0
Date of statement:	11.05.2018

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF FADUMO AHMED

I, FADUMO AHMED, will say as follows:-

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on 14th 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 lived on the 19th floor of Grenfell Tower in Flat 164 and moved in to the property in 2008. My flat had one bedroom, a living room, kitchen, and separate bathroom and toilet. I moved into the flat in 2008 and lived on my own. At first I really liked living in Grenfell Tower but this changed at the time of the refurbishment.
3. When the Council did the work there was no option given to us about how things would be done in our flats and the changes did not make things better. The workman came in and just did things in the way that they wanted to. They took all choice away from us. When I first arrived it was not like this. They let me see the property and asked how I liked it, but with the refurbishment it was changed and put me off the flat. There was a boiler put in the hall near the front door and pipes were all over the flat. They made the lift area (the lobby) smaller and made the ceilings lower so it felt like there was less space. It did not make the Tower better on the inside but worse.

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4. I start work [REDACTED] at 5pm, after the children have left, and that day I was working as normal. I have my own ID pass which means I can get in and out of the [REDACTED] building myself. I finished work at 9pm and then went straight home.
5. As I came home that night I remember smelling some kind of burning. It's hard for me to make sense of this but when I arrived back in Grenfell Tower and reached the 16th floor, I could just smell electrical burning or like someone had cooked and burnt something. I could not see smoke or fire and could not see where it was from and ignored this. This was a long time before the fire and it does not make sense to me how this was so early, but I know that I was not the only person who sensed this at that time. The fire resulted in me being in hospital for a week and I spoke to someone else in hospital who also remembered smelling something earlier that evening. There was a sense that something was burnt in the building even though it was 9pm and long before the fire.
6. At the time of the fire it was Ramadan and I broke my fast at about 9pm after work. After work I stayed in my flat and I was listening to Islamic lectures on my phone with headphones on. At about 1:20am I was still awake in my bedroom and listening to the lectures, when I got a phone call from my cousin, Sabah Mohammed, who told me that there was a fire in the building. She lives near Grenfell Tower and could see from the outside that it was on fire. She told me that I should come out of the Tower and get downstairs. I spoke to Sabah after the fire and she remembers checking her phone times and told me that she first called me at 1:20am. I was shocked by her call. There had never been a fire before in Grenfell Tower that I had seen. I did not check if there was any fire and at this time did not see any fire or smoke in my flat.
7. With Sabah's phone call I sensed it was serious and that something was very wrong and so I quickly got ready to leave the flat. I picked up my phone and keys, put my

shoes on and quickly came out of the flat. I was thinking of going downstairs. When I came out of my flat into the lobby it was full of dark smoke. It was thick dark grey and steamy and was very hard to see through. I could not see very far because of the smoke. It smelt a bit like gas and chemicals and I covered my mouth. It burned my eyes and I just wanted to cover my eyes because of the pain on my eyes. I could see my neighbour, Debbie Lamprell, standing opposite the two lifts near the cupboard doors. There is a cupboard opposite the two lifts and she was next to this. She lived on the same floor as me and had the corner flat, number 161. She looked frightened and said to me that people were going upstairs. I thought that she had instructions to go upstairs. She was not panicking but it was as though she had been given an instruction. It was also clear that fire was lower down the Tower and walking down towards the fire made less sense. I had known Debbie since I moved in and so I thought I should do what she said.

8. The door to the stairs was closed and I opened the door and went into the stairway. In the stairs there was only a little bit of smoke at that time and it was light. There was less smoke than in the lobby but there was some. There was no fire alarm and there was no one else on the floor at the time. Debbie and I walked slowly up the stairs.
9. On the way up the stairs from the 19th floor to the 23rd floor I saw no one else. I don't even know if Debbie was following me at the time. I went upstairs because Debbie had told me to. I thought that she might have had information about what we should do. I just followed what she said.
10. I think I went straight to the 23rd floor, but I am a little confused about whether it was the last floor. I came out into the lobby at the top and the smoke was even worse than on my floor. It was now very dark and thick and very hard to see. It made my eyes hurt and, as before, smelt of chemicals.
11. When I got to the top floor there were people standing in front of the door to Flat 201. This is the flat that was opposite the lift in the corner. The flat was in the same position in the building as Debbie's flat four floors below.

12. We were able to get in to Flat 201 although I had never been in the flat before and did not know whose flat it was. Inside the flat there was some smoke but a lot less than the lobby and I could also see fire at the windows. I was standing in the corridor and could look along the hall and see fire appearing in front of the living room window.
13. We stood in the corridor of the flat. I think there were about 10 people there and we were crowded around the entrance door and hallway. I've been shown pictures of people by the police and identified some of these. There was Debbie Lamprell and her male friend Gary Maunders. I often saw Debbie and Gary together and she lived on my floor. There was also my other neighbour, Amal Ahmedin from flat 166, who was also from my floor. She was with her cousin Amina Mahmud Idris, and daughter Amaya. There was also an afro-Caribbean man who I now know was Raymond Bernard and I think he was the tenant of Flat 201. There was also Berkti Haftom with her teenage son, Biruk Haftom. It was hard to recognise people and we couldn't talk to each other because of the smoke. By now the smoke was going into our mouths and we could barely breathe.
14. The front door of the flat was open a little and people were standing along the corridor near the door. People were acting in different ways, some were calm, some were panicking and trying to cover their mouths. We were all hiding in the corridor of the flat to get away from the flames near the window and because the lobby was so thick with smoke.
15. I think people were suffering because they were not able to breathe. The smoke was affecting people's minds and making it impossible to even think. I was feeling dizzy. It was like a gas.
16. Amal and I began to go to the bathroom to try and bring water out and throw it onto the fire in the window. We found a washing up bowl and about three times we carried water in the plastic bowl through to the living room. We threw the water on the window because the top of the window was on fire. The window opens in two ways, it can open completely on its hinges like a normal window or it can tilt forward at the top. It was tilted open at the top and the top had caught fire and was burning away. We were trying to throw water onto the window to try and put it out. I was worried

because I could see that the television was close by the window and was worried that it might become dangerous because of the fire and water and so we stopped.

17. I realised that the water was not helping. I went back to the area just inside the front door near the boiler. At that time I don't know how many people were still standing there. There were about 10 people next to the door and some were saying that they could not breathe. We felt trapped as the fire had broken into the flat through the window and was in the living room and thick smoke from the lobby was coming into the flat. We were trapped with fire from one side that was starting to come in and thick smoke on the other side. I realised that I needed to get out and so I came out of the flat into the lobby which was full of thick black smoke. I ran out of flat 201 straight into the stairway. I couldn't see anything in the lobby because it was so full of smoke but the door to the stair was very close.
18. Around this time my family was calling me again and again telling me to get out and come downstairs. This was not that easy and they did not understand what I was seeing. I was worried about the fire coming from below and thought that there was no hope going downstairs. I tried to go up further to get away from the fire but I quickly reached a metal door that was padlocked. I tried to get through the door and banged it again and again. I wanted to get out at the top but couldn't. My police statement says I got onto the roof. This is not correct. I tried to get on the roof and banged on the door to get up there but could not get out. I could hear a helicopter outside and kept banging on the metal door. It was a steel brownish colour door. It was very small but locked. I could hear the helicopter and kept thinking that there was no way for them to get in. They couldn't see me and I don't know why I was banging or how long I stayed there.
19. By now smoke started to come onto the stairs. I was on the phone to my cousin who was telling me 'just come down, just come down' but I knew how bad the smoke was in the lobby and knew that the fire must have been stronger downstairs. Even though my cousin was saying "come down" I thought there was just no hope going down.
20. More smoke was coming the stairs and making it hard to face going down. It was as if the smoke was following me up. It very scary. The smoke was dark and had a terrible smell. It was like drinking gas.

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21. My cousin was on the phone but I was thinking that they couldn't see what was really going on. The smoke was coming up hitting me and what they were saying and what I was doing, were completely different. The smoke was coming up towards me. That is what stopped me from going down stairs. I felt like my cousin just couldn't understand. I appreciated their calls but the reality was so different.

22. As I was banging on the door more and more smoke was coming up. The smoke was getting thicker and thicker all the time in the stairwell. It was now so thick that I couldn't even see the stairs underneath my feet.

23. I remember speaking to my cousin on the phone. I wasn't thinking straight and was breathing chemicals. Whenever the phone rang I wasn't always able to answer. At one stage my sister called me. I heard them both telling me to come down the stairs.

24. I decided to try and walk down the stairs but could hardly walk. On the way down there was smoke in the stairs. It was very dark and so I couldn't see things properly. As I got further down the smoke got thicker and it became more and more difficult. I could not breathe very well and was coughing. I could not walk properly and had to hold the rails to steady myself.

25. The further I went down the worse the smoke was. It was making me cough and was making me feel dizzy but I came down two or three flights but finally could not do any more and sat down against the wall. I think this was between floor 20 and 21. I remember this because it was half-way between floors and I was sitting and leaning with my back against the wall. I don't know how long I was sitting there. It may have been half an hour, I just don't know.

26. There was so much smoke and breathing was so difficult and I felt weak. I just prayed. I wanted the smoke to take my soul, but I didn't want to experience the fire. I knew I was going to die and felt like I was waiting to die. I was thinking about the good things that I have done. In Islam we believe that the good things you have done in your life will protect you at the end. I was wondering whether I had done enough good in my life and whether I had done the things that I should have done.

27. After about half an hour I saw a light coming towards me and I heard a fireman's voice. The fire man had a light on his forehead and I could see it through the smoke. I

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don't remember speaking to him. He wanted to hold my hand to help me down the stairs but I was too dizzy to walk very far and he began to carry me. I remember very little from this point. I remember saying thank you. I remember that he said that we needed to go downstairs. I could not continue walking and he soon had to carry me down because I couldn't walk. He was going very fast to get down the stairs but after this I don't really remember what happened.

28. My next memory is lying down somewhere and the ambulance people were with me. There was an ambulance and paramedics and they were giving me oxygen. They took me to St Mary's hospital and I was there for about a week.
29. My health has suffered and has been slow to improve. The fire and events since have had a serious impact on me. I don't want to, in this statement, go into detail about the full impact that this has had on me.
30. There is much I want to say about the impact of the fire, the building and the aftermath but I understand this is to be dealt with in Phase 2.

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 to be published on the Inquiry's website.

I am willing for the Police to be given a copy of this statement and I understand that it may be used in connection with any consequent investigation and prosecution.

Signed: 

On this 11 day of May 2018.

Fadumo Ahmed