

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF FARAH SERROUKH

I, FARAH SERROUKH will say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place in the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017 which I make for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I would wish to make a further statement to address issues falling to be dealt with in Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

Background

2. I am [REDACTED] years old.
3. On the night of the Grenfell Tower fire, I lived in [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk with my husband and our four children. I have lived there since 2007. My flat is very close to Grenfell Tower.
4. I work in a [REDACTED] which is close to Grenfell Tower. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I started working there in 2015. Many of the customers [REDACTED]
were Grenfell Tower residents. I knew people who lived in the Tower. We were a community.

The Council and the TMO

5. We complained in the past to the TMO about gas smelling in Bramley Road.

6. My experience with the TMO and RBKC is not good. Since I moved into [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk I have had constant problems with a leak in the kitchen. I have had this problem since 2007. There was damp for many years; I called them many times about it but they would just come and patch it up. There is no proper investment and their repairs are always shoddy. They do not care and have no regard for us. There is more I can say about this in Phase 2.
7. I remember speaking to some of the Grenfell Tower residents during the refurbishment. They mentioned that the contractors had no regard for their time. They would make appointments for people and cancel at the last minute.

14 June

8. It was Ramadan and I woke up at 1.55am to prepare *suhoor*, which is the meal before fasting begins. My husband then told me that my phone had constantly been ringing.
9. When I checked my phone, I saw many missed calls. As I was looking at my phone, my friend Hanan called. She lived in [REDACTED]. She sounded very scared and told me that there was a huge fire in Grenfell Tower. She told me to get out of my home and run. I looked out of the window and saw fire in the Tower. I have videos on my phone that I took. The flat was covered in flames. I can give these videos to the Inquiry if they are needed.
10. Within five minutes of seeing the fire I ran outside with my husband and four kids. We stood in a green space between Hurstway Walk and Testerton Walk and remained there for three hours. I heard a lot of screaming from the Tower. The fire just kept getting worse and worse. It was upsetting to see people stuck in their flats. I was shocked at what was happening.
11. People inside the Tower were trying to jump out and were also waving their arms and towels to get attention. Some people ran in to Grenfell Tower to help; if it wasn't for people running in to save people, more people would have died. The emergency services did the best that they could given the space that they had.

12. As I stood outside, the blaze got stronger. I was shocked and scared. All I could do was think about my friends who lived in the Tower. I thought of Nur Huda El-Wahabi who was in year 11; she helped my kids with school. We were family friends and I knew her mother Faouzia. I attempted to call Nur Huda on the night but I could not get through.
13. I also thought of Farah Hamdan who was a childhood friend. She had just had a baby. She was in the year below me at school.
14. I remember that the firefighters were struggling with access and they did not have enough water to put the fire out. Initially, I know that the emergency services were letting people through to help their families but as the fire got stronger, people were not allowed to go back into the tower. My sister-in-law spoke to Faouzia El-Wahabi and she told her that she was told to stay put. I thought this was very dangerous because I could see the fire blazing on the outside. No one should have been told to stay put in those conditions.
15. I did not speak to anyone in the tower. But I saw Abdesalam Sebbar's grandkids and daughter outside. They were distraught and were scared. We were all afraid. The heat of the fire was strong, the flame was orange and yellow in colour and there was black smoke. The fire spread really quickly and was uncontrollable.

Impact

16. There were people I knew who died in the Tower that night. I found out that the El-Wahabi family had all died. I knew Faouzia El-Wahabi and her daughter Nur Huda. I knew from the family of problems residents had with the Council and the TMO. On many occasions the lifts were not working and she lived on the 20th floor which made walking up and down very difficult. She would struggle to carry her shopping up. She even stayed with a friend for three weeks because the lifts were not working.
17. Farah Hamdan died with her husband and her baby. Her husband had escaped the fire with two of their daughters. He then went back for Farah and the baby and he never

came out again. I later find out that Farah passed away holding her baby on the stairs. One of her daughters that was brought out to safety survived.

18. I attended the funerals of most of the people who died that night. They were my neighbours and we were all part of one big community that has now been destroyed by the fire.

19. After the fire we were not allowed in [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk for three days. We were all evacuated. I was worried. I called the TMO and asked if it was safe. They told me that I could go back but at my own risk. We then moved in with my mum. Afterwards I was housed in Hilton Hotel. Now I am in temporary accommodation. I cannot go back to my home again. I am torn. It is my home and I even did my own repairs, but I cannot sleep in there again because it will bring back bad memories.

20. I blame the people who used cheap materials for the fire.

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.

SIGNED: _____



DATE: _____

28/6/18