I, INES TAVARES ALVES, will say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on Tuesday 13th June 2017 into the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017, which I make for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I may wish to make a further statement to address issues falling to be dealt with in Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

   Background


3. Prior to the fire, I lived at Flat 105 on the 13th floor in Grenfell Tower. I lived with my mum, Maria de Fatima, my dad, Manuel Miguel Ferreira, and my brother Tiago. I lived in the flat until I was about five years old.
4. When we moved out of the Tower, my parents kept in touch with their friends from the area. They had bonded with other parents who had children the same age as me and my brother and we would often go to after-school and homework clubs with their children. We would socialise quite a lot with residents in and around the Tower and there was a strong sense of community.

5. We moved back to the flat when I was about 10 or 11 years old. I remember being really excited. The house we were living in was quite a long commute to school. I found it stressful. Being back at the Tower also meant I could see and socialise with my friends more.

6. My parents were really close to the other residents on our floor. I remember across the hall, Dorinda, Pepe and Ivan lived. My brother was really good friends with Ivan and we had pretty much grown up with them.

7. The majority of my friends were from the area too, although none of them lived in the Tower. When we moved back to the Tower, I would see them almost every day. We would use the parks around the Tower or socialise in the communal areas downstairs so those we didn’t socialise with, we knew to at least say hello to.

8. Everyone was really friendly and I experienced no issues with anyone.

9. I knew Nur Huda El-Wahabi to say hello to. She was in my year at school. We also went to the same gym and occasionally had classes together. I would see her in the gym or in the lift in the Tower and we would have a brief chat before going our separate ways.
10. I took a GCSE in Portuguese Language in 2015 and then an AS level in 2016. At the time of the fire, I was studying for my A-Level in Portuguese Language as well as 10 GCSE's.

11. My studies were going well but, as with most people, I always felt like I could have done a bit more. I was predicted A* to B’s in all my subjects.

12. I enjoyed studying. My favourite subject was maths. I love numbers.

13th June

13. On the 13th June I had my maths exam at 9am. I felt it had gone really well and I was really happy. When I finished at 10:30am, I checked on Twitter on the ‘unofficial mark scheme’. This is where other students upload their answers to an exam they’ve just sat and you compare to see if you were on the right track. Seeing everyone else’s comments reassured me and I felt really pleased.

14. After the exam, I left school and met up with a couple of friends. We went to Holland Park and relaxed on the grass. It was a warm summer’s day. We talked about the exam and just generally caught up. I stayed for about an hour before going back home.

15. I had planned to go to the library in Paddington that day. There is a library closer but it is not open as late. However, my mum had texted me earlier in the day to tell me that we were going for dinner with her cousin and her cousin’s daughter so I didn’t want to waste time travelling. I decided to go to the coffee shop in the leisure centre downstairs and study there.

16. I had two exams the next day. The morning exam was chemistry and the afternoon exam was history.

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17. The coffee shop was busy but not overcrowded. It was a nice day so I sat in the seating area outside studying. One of my friends joined me for a little while after she finished school.

18. I arrived back home around 7pm. I had a shower and got ready. My mum’s cousin and her daughter arrived and we left for dinner sometime between 7:50pm and 8:20pm. We took both mum and dad’s cars so we would all fit.

19. After dinner, I was starting to get tired. I was also feeling quite apprehensive about my exams then next day. I wanted to go over my revision again before going to bed so I asked my mum if we could go home. We stayed about 10 more minutes whilst mum persuaded her cousin to come back to our flat for coffee.

20. We left the restaurant at around 10pm. Tiago had made plans to see his girlfriend so my dad dropped him at Queensway whilst my mum drove the rest of us straight home.

21. We got home around 10:30pm. I went straight to my room and revised. Dad arrived a little later. I studied for around 45 minutes but I was getting really tired. I was feeling quite stressed too so I decided to get some sleep but get up early to go over my chemistry notes. I knew I had time after my chemistry exam to revise more history. I set my alarm for 5am and went to sleep around 11:15pm.

14th June

22. Around 1am, I heard heavy footsteps in the corridor and then someone turned the light on. Usually, my parents didn’t switch that light on at night because the light creeps under my bedroom door. I think I must have been in a light sleep at this point because that wouldn’t have usually woken me. I then heard my dad and Tiago talking. I couldn’t really hear what

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they were saying but assumed they were just being noisy. I was really cross because they knew
I had my exams the next morning. I closed my eyes and tried to go back to sleep.

23. A few moments later, dad burst into my room and told me to ‘get out’. I think this was around
1am. He said there was a fire in the building and that he was going to let the neighbours know
but I should leave immediately with my brother.

24. I had heard from friends about the fire in Trellick Tower, near Portobello Road a few weeks
ago so I was not that worried. I had no doubt that the fire would be brought under control and
contained soon enough. I was more annoyed that I would be losing sleep the night before the
exams. I just wanted to go back to sleep.

25. Usually, it takes me a long time to get up and ready but I knew from what dad had said that I
should act with speed. I had left my clothes from dinner on the floor so I put my blue jeans
and white jumper on over my pyjamas, which was just a baggy shirt. I threw on some black
trainers but did not have time to put on a bra. My GCSE’s were on my mind so I grabbed my
chemistry and history revision notes and phone and left the flat with my brother. When we
left, my dad was knocking on our neighbours’ doors trying to wake them up. At no point
throughout the night did I hear any fire alarms.

26. When we left, I was quite calm. The only thing I felt stressed about were my GCSE’s.
However, as my brother and I were running down the stairs, the adrenaline kicked in and I
started to feel a bit anxious. We didn’t know how big the fire was or where it was. I remember
asking my brother lots of questions like along those lines but he didn’t know the answers.

27. I didn’t see any other residents as we were running down the stairs. When we got to the sixth
floor we started to smell a faint burning smell. There was no smoke. As we carried on down,
the smell got slightly stronger but nothing intense.

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28. From this point onwards my recollection is vague. I am not sure if things I can remember are things I actually saw or things that I have since been told. Unless otherwise stated, the following account is mine.

29. As we got to the fourth floor, we saw a woman by the door. She seemed to be doing nothing other than propping the fire exit door open into the lobby. She was chubby, dark skinned, average height and dressed in her pyjamas or a robe. I started to see white smoke. It was not very thick. I can’t remember if we went into the lobby or just saw this from the stairwell.

30. I also remember seeing my mum and a lady carrying a huge, dark coloured suitcase. She was maybe Hispanic or of South American origin. I think my mum was helping her carry the suitcase. I cant remember where we were at this point, or any specific conversations.

31. As we got to the new stairs, which were visible from the outside of the building, I saw firefighters. They were wearing full firefighting equipment, including a breathing apparatus but didn’t seem concerned. They were walking rather than running up the stairs.

32. I arrived at the bottom of the Tower with my brother, my mum and the lady with the suitcase. The lady went off somewhere and my mum was talking to other residents. I can’t remember exiting or which exit we used but I remember sitting on one of the raised concrete vent type things outside the Tower. I was sat no more than a couple of meters outside the Tower facing the east façade. I have marked on a plan of the area where I was standing and I exhibit this at ITA/1.

33. As I looked up and could see a fire on the fourth floor. There were flames inside the flat behind the window on the left. I have marked on a plan of the Tower where I saw this which I
exhibit at ITA/2. I knew it was fourth floor it was the first set of original flats and looked like
the rest of the building, unlike the flats added in after the renovation.

34. Within a few minutes of being downstairs, a lady with two small children who lived on the
fourth floor came outside. Her children were in their pyjamas so my mum brought them some
warmer clothes from our garage that she had been collecting for the refugees in Calais. They
had come out in panic and I remember the woman was crying or at least very tearful. She said
she thought the fire was going to go into their apartment. She was quite stressed.

35. Firemen had begun gathering outside the main entrance and were reeling out their hoses. At
one point, I was had to let them in because they didn’t have a key fob to enter the glass doors.

36. I was still not particularly worried by this point. The firemen were there with their hoses and
seemed to be calm. I had no doubt that the fire would be contained. All the residents on the
green seemed to be calm except those who we’re coming from the fourth floor.

37. I think at some point my mum spoke to the man whose flat it was but I don’t remember if I
was there or she has told me about it since. I just remember him in his slippers and possibly a
robe pacing back and forth and saying ‘oh my God’ constantly. He was so distressed.

38. A few minutes later, dad came out of the Tower. He said to mum that he had called everyone
on our floor but was worried that he might regret it. He said if it’s not too serious then they
will be annoyed at him for waking them up. Mum said something like “at least they’re awake
now though”.

39. Everyone was wandering around the grass, watching the fire and talking to other residents.
Maybe about 10 minutes later around 1:10am, the window behind where the fire was popped
out and the flames escaped. I cannot remember if it was open or closed; I just remember

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seeing it fall out. The flames were now on the outside of the Tower. The flames were around the flat but getting bigger. This is when debris started to fall.

40. There was a yellow bin underneath where the flat the fire started. As soon as the debris began falling, I remember my mum saying how confused she was as to why the firemen were not moving the bin out of the way. She was worried that the debris would set the bin alight, which would cause another fire at the bottom of the Tower and make things worse.

41. The police had now arrived and were pushing residents further back onto the grass away from the Tower. My parents thought it best that we moved away so my brother and I went to opposite side of the green where there were some concrete benches we could sit on. Mum and dad stayed with the residents on the green closer to the Tower. I exhibit where I was standing at ITA/3.

42. I still thought the fire would be brought under control and my only real concern was my chemistry exam in a few hours so I asked my brother to test me on my revision notes. By now, there were a few other residents congregating outside too.

43. Less than five minutes later, I looked up at the Tower and could see the flames getting bigger and bigger. They were now outside of the Tower, far more vivid and escalating from the fourth floor. I watched in utter disbelief as within minutes the flames then reached the fifth, sixth, seventh and then eighth floor. I took a photograph at this point, which shows the time as 1:16am. I tried to concentrate on my revision but extent of the fire was alarming. I couldn’t concentrate properly.

44. At 1:24am, I took another picture because it had reached maybe the 11th or 12th floor. I couldn’t believe that in eight minutes it had spread this quickly. I posted the pictures on snapchat but did not save them in my story so only have screenshots of the pictures. The fire

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seemed to travel up the right side of the east façade and once it reached the top above Flat 206 become fiercer. I have drawn on an image of the Tower how the fire travelled up, which I exhibit as ITA/4.

45. I was in shock and started to panic about it reaching our flat. I kept trying to reassure myself that the fire brigade was there and it would be fine but the speed at which the flames were travelling was making me worry.

46. Other residents outside started to panic too. I remember people outside just yelling things like ‘oh my God!’ I overheard people saying that some people in the Tower had started to switch on their lights to let the emergency services know they were there. I wondered if they were trapped but still believed they would be rescued. It didn’t even cross my mind that there may be deaths.

47. I think the extent of the flames fueled chaos on the grass. Residents started to panic but no one was being given any reassurance by the police. I can’t remember overhearing or seeing anything specific but I became really distressed and started to hyperventilate. It was frightening to see how fast the flames had escalated and I kept thinking if within ten minutes it’s got to the top of this side then it wouldn’t be long before it went around and engulfed our flat.

48. I kept asking my brother if it was going to burn all our things. He tried to calm me down and reassure me. He thought that maybe we should go to a family friend’s house so I could try and get some sleep before my exams. He went over to talk to my parents.

49. I overheard a conversation between mum and dad. Dad wanted mum to drive us to a house they look after in Victoria because he didn’t want to disturb their friends in the middle of the night. He said we wouldn’t be staying that long and it was not worth waking them up. Mum

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wanted to stay around the area and help so in the end, I think she called Lucia and Filip and asked if we could go over.

50. Lucia and Filip are close family friends and although they were sleeping at the time, they did not mind us going around. They live in House with their two sons, Lucas who was years old and Simao who I think was about years old. Their flat has a balcony from which you can see some of the north façade and the entire west facade of the Tower.

51. Tiago and I left for their house around 1:30am. By this point, the flames had now started to spread across the top of flat 201 and round to the north façade. We walked between Kensington Aldridge Academy and the Leisure centre and headed up to Silchester Road. Once we were behind the academy, we were not able to see the Tower. I started running from panic and adrenaline. At the top of Silchester Road, we took a left onto Bramley Road. I looked over to the Tower and could see that the flames had spread across the top of flat 201 and round to the north façade. I continued running down and turned left down Street to Lucia and Filip’s flat. I exhibit where I was at ITA/5.

52. It took us about three or four minutes to get to the flat. Although I couldn’t see any flames when I arrived, I could see a bright reflection in the sky like someone had switched a light on around the east façade of the Tower.

53. Lucia and Filip were waiting for us when we arrived. I was really panicky and shaking. They offered us food and water but I had lost my appetite. I could tell they were worried about us. My brother said that I needed to relax and told me to go to be. I had some water and went into Simao’s room to try and sleep.

54. I laid down and it all felt like a horrible dream. I kept hoping that if I went to sleep and woke up, it wouldn’t be true. I closed my eyes but I could still hear things going outside. I could

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hear people on the street outside. I wasn’t sure if they were residents or passerbys but they were commenting on the fire and how bad it was. I could hear panic in their voices. I could also hear the crackling of the fire. I started hyperventilating and shaking again. I tried to control how I was feeling but I just couldn’t. People on the streets began to scream and I knew then that I was not going to be able to sleep.

55. After about ten or 15 minutes, I decided that I wasn’t going to be able to sleep so I may as well try to revise. I went back into the sitting room. Filip lent me some headphones and I plugged them into my phone to listen to music. I hoped that would drown out the horrible noises outside. I sat on their sofa and tried to revise. I think my brother, Lucia and Filip were on the balcony, which is off of their kitchen.

56. Directly opposite the sofa they have a window that faces the Tower. I kept looking up and hoping that the fire wouldn’t reach that side. Within five minutes or so, Lucas woke up. He saw me sat on the sofa and tried to comfort me. Filip came back in and he and Lucas decided that they would go to the Tower to see if they could help anyone.

57. I had my revision book on my lap but couldn’t help looking up out of the window. I couldn’t see where the flames were. My friend, who lives in Whitstable House on Silchester Road was also up revising so I text him and he was sending me pictures. I kept counting the windows to see if it had reached our flat. The tension was unbearable and I kept just hoping and praying that it would be brought under control.

58. I have no idea what time mum, dad, Fillip and Lucas came back. The anxiety was mounting and mum, dad and Tiago were becoming really stressed. I can’t really remember what was happening; I just remember a lot of tension. At one point, mum, Tiago and I think Lucia went to pray in one of Lucia’s bedrooms. Mum and dad were both crying.

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59. I think sometime between 2am and 3am, we started to hear people from the Tower screaming for help. I still didn’t think lives would be lost but found their screams terrifying and terrorising. Around this time, Simao woke up. We didn’t want him to see anything so we closed the curtains in the sitting room and tried to put him back to bed.

60. I switched on the television to see if there was anything on BBC news. I remember something big was going on at the time but have no idea now what it was. They were reporting on that but every now and then a banner across the bottom of the screen would flag up as breaking news about a major fire in London. There was no real information though so I kept watching hoping for some reassurance. A few times, Simao woke up so I would try and entertain him and then put him back to bed. I kept walking back and forth to the balcony from the sitting room. I don’t know exactly how long I did this for but I remember that time flew by so quickly. It is all a bit of a blur.

61. I remember being on the balcony and watching flames on the north façade moving closer and closer to our flat. The flames seemed to be moving across the top, down and then back up diagonally. It was the most painstaking experience not knowing if we were going to lose our home and all our things. I exhibit what I saw at ITA/6.

62. I think sometime between 2am and 4am, I saw the fire hit my parents’ bedroom. I absolutely devastated but there was also a weird sense of relief. I was now free of the anxiety that had plagued me all night, wondering if we would have a home to go back to. I no longer felt this deep apprehension. There was no hope left.

63. I watched the fire for a little while longer. I think I was in shock. I felt empty and numb. I watched the flames moving from the north to the west façade before the west façade became engulfed in flames from south side. I think this was around 4am.

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64. I remember as day was breaking, news reporters knocked on door. They asked Lucia and Filip if they could use their balcony to record because the view was very good. They were let in and stayed on the balcony whilst I went back into the living room.

65. I started to worry about my exams. I tried to go over my chemistry notes but I wasn’t able to focus. There was a really surreal feel in the flat. Everyone seemed calmer but empty at the same time.

66. My friends started to wake up and hear of the fire. My phone was on charge in Simao’s room so I missed a lot of calls from friends who were checking if I was ok. I ended up going back and forth to check my phone and around 5am, managed to speak to one friend who updated all my other friends. When I was telling her what had happened, I remember being very matter of fact and just being in a state of shock.

67. I was still unable to revise properly and was now starting to feel quite disorientated from a lack of sleep. I never considered not doing my exam but wondered if I would be able to get extra time. I decided instead to go into school early and find a corner to sit in and revise.

My exam

68. I had breakfast around 6am to 6:30am. I think my parents were still in a state of shock so Filip took control of the situation. Fillip gave me £20 for food and transport and lent me his headphones to take to school. Before I left, I asked my parents if I could take my phone to school so they could let me know where to go after my exams. They were fine with this. Mum was more worried about me not wearing my uniform and they were both worried about whether the events of that night would affect my grade. I tried to reassure them and left for school. I was also thinking that I didn’t want to just sit at home and do nothing, I wanted to at least try to maintain some normality. I think I was on auto pilot.
69. There were lots of road closures and public transport was not running properly so my friend’s mum agreed to take us. My friend lives on an estate just off Bramley Road so I walked there. There was a lot of police tape cordoning off areas but I managed to get around it and arrived at my friend’s house around 7am. There was a lot of traffic en route but we eventually got to school around 8am.

70. I bumped into some friends at the school gate and walked up to the main reception entrance. Everyone was congregating in Cloisters, which is a corridor or hall type area so we headed there. I think the receptionists saw that I was not in my uniform and called the teachers. About five or 10 minutes after I arrived, the teachers pulled me aside and asked me how I was. They asked if everyone from my household had escaped. Apparently, they had looked at the records to see if any of their students lived in the Tower and were waiting to see if they showed up. I was the only one in my year who was in the Tower.

71. When my teachers first started asking me questions, I felt fine. I was very matter of fact but then as they continued asking a few more, it suddenly hit me and I started crying. Although at this point I didn’t know lives had been lost, I was still in a state of shock at losing everything. I was taken to the examiner’s office. They asked me if I wanted to sit the exams. The options were explained to me about averaging my grade out but I didn’t really understand. I didn’t seem to be able to retain any information. In my head I just kept thinking that chemistry was my strongest subject and if my grades were to be averaged out from my biology results, they would be lower than the A* I was predicted. I might also be able to get ‘consideration marks’ so I thought I should sit the exam and try my best. I knew I would not be able to concentrate by that afternoon so asked to be excused from my history exam, which was agreed.

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72. I was asked if I wanted to sit my exam in another room, separate to the other students. I was used to the exam hall and didn’t want a big change so asked to sit at the back of the hall instead.

73. I sat the exam but did not feel prepared. I felt it went well but not as well as it could have gone. I had lost so much revision time, I was so tired and my head felt foggy. I was not able to concentrate and kept having to reread the questions.

74. After the exam, the papers were being collected and I burst into tears. I no longer had the stress of my exams to concentrate on and so the reality of what had happened the night before hit me. As I left with my row, one of the teachers took me into a separate room. My friends followed and were trying to console me. They gave me hugs and tired to make me feel better. After about an hour, I felt like I had let it all out and started to feel a bit more composed. I text my parents and they told me to head back to Lucia and Filip’s flat.

75. The school gave me an oyster card and more cash. My friends had also brought in some clothes and underwear for me. I felt so grateful.

76. I don’t remember how I got home but I remember there being a lot of traffic around the Hammersmith area. I remember walking from Shepherds bush to Lucia and Filip’s flat. I also remember seeing a few friends on the way who didn’t go to my school. They were asking how I was. I felt fine by this point but was probably still in shock.

77. When I got to Lucia and Filip’s flat, I heard that people had donated clothes. My friends from primary school who live around the area called me and asked if I wanted to meet up with them at the donation centres to pick up a few bits, and also offer our help.

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78. I remember thinking it was strange but my parents didn’t want me to go out. I don’t know what they were scared of but eventually, they agreed for me to go out with dad and Filip. We got a couple of items of clothing each and brought them back to Lucia and Filip’s flat. I changed my top and went out to meet my friends.

79. I heard people were missing but at this point I was looking on social media and no one was confirmed dead. I assumed everyone had got out but people were missing because some had been rushed off to hospitals without relatives knowing and some shelters in the centres weren’t communicating with other shelters. I assumed everyone was ok and it was just a matter of time before everyone would be found.

80. I spent the rest of the day with friends trying to get some normality back to life. We also went to donation centres and they helped me pick out a few more items of clothing. When I got back to Lucia and Filip’s flat some other family friends had popped over to see how we all were. I stayed with them for a bit before their son and Lucas took me to Nottinghill to distract me.

81. A few days later I found out about the amount of people who had died in the Tower. I couldn’t believe it. I kept thinking ‘that could’ve been us’ or ‘that could’ve been me’. Missing posters started to go up too and when I saw a face I recognised I felt shocked and distressed. Hearing about the El-Wahabi was the hardest because they were the ones I had the most contact with.

82. I ended up missing four exams because of the fire. I wanted to sit them but all my materials and revision notes were lost in the fire and I just didn’t feel prepared. I felt not having notes wasn’t really a good enough excuse but I thought if I sat the exam all my grades would be brought down quite drastically. I was also doing a lot of interviews with the media at the time and felt quite emotionally overwhelmed. I was really struggling to get to grips with the amount of deaths and losing all our possessions and couldn’t really concentrate.

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83. I ended up getting an A for the chemistry exam I sat the morning after the fire. I was disappointed with my result because I wanted an A*. Chemistry is one of my strongest subjects and in my chemistry core exam the year before, I got 100%. I later found out that I was a couple of marks of an A*, which was really annoying.

84. I missed two history exams so my previous history exam and controlled assessment were taken into account so I ended up with a B, which was my predicted grade. I also missed a physics exam so my overall grade was based on a controlled assessment, my biology exam and my chemistry exam. I got an A as predicted. In Religious Education, I was predicted an A but got a C because of the average marking. All my friends did really well in this exam and I was feeling confident so this was especially disappointing.

85. In September 2017, I started sixth form at the same school. I am studying maths, chemistry and economics. My target grades, which are based on my SATs and GCSEs are all Bs. However, I completed my mocks over Christmas and didn’t do very well.

Aftermath

86. Since the fire, I have struggled with my studies. I still enjoy them but I find it so much more difficult to concentrate. I also tend to give up more easily. If don’t understand something, I will skip it, whereas before I would always search for the answer. I don’t seem to care as much as before and have lost the passion I used to have. I am also really worried that the bits I missed out on revising for my GCSE’s were crucial foundations that I don’t have and this is why I am struggling so much more now. I haven’t spoken to anyone about this. I am just trying to get on. I am not the type of person who shows stress.

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94. I know the fire has affected the rest of my family but the in all different ways. It’s horrible to see that even now, ten months on, they’re all still suffering.

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: \(18 \backslash 05 \backslash 2018\).