

**Witness Statement of: Isabel Ranito**

**No. of statement: 1**

**Exhibits:**

**Date of statement: 18/05/18**

**GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF ISABEL RANITO**

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I, ISABEL RANITO, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement about 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 make a further statement as part of Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

Background

2. I am a Core Participant to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
3. I moved into [REDACTED] Testerton Walk in April 2001. The property is a 3 bedroom maisonette. I lived there with my husband, Cesar Ranito. We have two kids, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They moved to [REDACTED] to study in 2011.
4. 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.
5. I have been employed [REDACTED] for 21 years.

14 June

6. It was around 12.30am – 12.50 am on 14 June 2017 when my husband got home from work. It had been a normal day for me. I had gotten home from work at around 6pm. I had eaten dinner and while I was waiting for my husband to get home I watched a Portuguese telenovela.
7. When my husband came in, he came and sat down by me. After a couple of minutes he said that he could smell smoke. I was surprised because I hadn't noticed anything unusual until he said it. He went out on the balcony. Although it was a warm night, I had kept the balcony door closed as I was in the property on my own. Once my husband opened the balcony door, I could hear screaming from outside. My husband came back in and told me to get dressed while he went outside to find out what was going on. I was confused as I had no idea what was going on.
8. I closed the balcony door and quickly threw on the same clothes I'd worn at work that day. About 5 minutes later, my husband ran back into the flat, He was panicked and shouting that there was a fire at Grenfell Tower. He said that we needed to leave straight away. We left within a couple of minutes. I grabbed my phone and we left. We were in such a panic we even forgot to shut all the windows in the flat.
9. We exited through the fire exit which was closest to the Tower. We went back to the spot my husband had been in when he first saw the Tower. I could see that there was a fire on about the fourth floor of the Tower. I was completely shocked. When we first went out the fire was mostly concentrated on that level of the Tower. Within 10 minutes it was shooting up everywhere. I could not believe how fast it was moving. It was moving like someone was pouring petrol all over the building. At first I had thought that the firefighters would be able to put the fire out but once it started spreading, I realised that it was going to be impossible. Firefighters were trying to spray water on the Tower but it didn't seem to be doing much. The fire was spreading all over the Tower and it was clear to see that the water wouldn't be able to reach the highest floors anyway.
10. There were around 20 other people who were stood with us watching with us. There were other people close by near the entrance to Grenfell Tower. We were all

screaming and shouting. One woman came to the window; she was shouting ‘what’s happening?’ I was shouting at her ‘there’s a fire, get out!’ As the fire hadn’t spread everywhere yet there were lots of people inside the Tower who didn’t know that the building was on fire. There were other people inside the Tower who realised that there was a fire. They were screaming for help and trying to signal with their mobile phones. I could also hear the sound of fire alarms that were going off inside the Tower. It was awful. There was so much chaos.

11. While we were stood watching there was a massive bang followed by a sudden explosion. There were lots of blue flames; I thought it must be from gas. There were windows shattering and debris falling off the building. There were flaming chunks of cladding and insulation coming down. It was terrifying to witness. I think we were outside watching from that spot for about 15 minutes. Then my husband said we should move further away.
12. We ran towards the other side, closer to Hurstway Walk. On that side there were more people there watching the Tower. That side of the Tower, facing Latimer Road Station, wasn’t on fire yet so there were lots of people in the Tower who didn’t fully understand what was happening yet. I was shouting to people in the Tower that there was a fire. There were firefighters using megaphones and they were telling the people in the Tower to stay where they were. I didn’t understand why they were saying that as it was obvious the fire was going to spread around to their side soon.
13. The black smoke coming off the Tower was awful and it was making it difficult to breathe so we decided to move further away from the Tower. We went towards the main road near Latimer Road Station. There was already a lot of people there watching the Tower, I think around 200 people. We stayed there watching the fire for hours. People were screaming and crying. It was awful.
14. At one point, I saw a family at the window of one of the flats in the Tower. I think that were at the very top on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor. I think there were two adults and two kids. They were by the window and they were waving something. I think it was a mop. The flats near them were on fire and the flames were spreading towards them. Eventually the fire reached them and after that they disappeared from the window. I

knew that there weren't any firefighters in the building at the time especially not that high up. The realisation that they must have died is horrifying. There were other people who had been coming to the windows, screaming for help, then retreating back inside and then coming back to the windows. After a while they stopped coming back to the windows and the screaming stopped. All that we could see of the Tower was on fire.

15. Most of the time we stayed near Latimer Road Station but at one point we walked around to the back of the Tower. I distinctly remember seeing a firefighter walk past us near Bramley Road with his neck burnt. I also saw another firefighter who had fainted and two other firefighters were holding him up. There were firefighters crying. It was really horrible to see that even the firefighters, people who are trained for these situations, so affected by what was happening.

16. As it became daylight, my husband and I decided to walk back to Whitchurch Road near our block of flats. I sat down on a bench and had some water. I saw two policemen with a battering ram trying to open the doors to our block. We then walked over and stood by the green area in between Barandon Walk and Testerton Walk. It was light but the Tower was still burning. A journalist wanted to ask me some questions which I agreed to. I can't even really remember what I told him now. I was in such shock at the time.

17. At around 7.30am, people started shouting that they could see someone still in the Tower. One of the journalists looked through his photo lens and said that it was a Chinese looking man. We could see him coming to the window waving a towel and then moving away from the window again. He was trapped inside the Tower the whole night. I later heard that he was blind. I still think about that poor man although I heard that he was rescued.

18. I was starting to feel really weak [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

19. At around 8am, the officer escorted me and my husband into Testerton Walk. I walked up to the flat with the officer whilst my husband waited by the entrance inside. As I walked down the corridor, I could see a lot of rubbish and debris from the Tower on the floor. The corridor was full of water. My shoes were soaked. The police officer was telling me to look up. I tried to do that because I didn't want to see anything disturbing. Before I could look away I noticed that there was a dead body in the Walkway, it was covered in plastic. I later found out that there were other dead bodies in the corridor and that they had been hosed down with water because they had been on fire. The officer waited outside the flat while I quickly grabbed [REDACTED] and used the loo. I was only inside for a few minutes. I wanted to get out of the block as quickly as possible. It was so horrible knowing there was a body out in the corridor.

20. My husband and I then went over to St Clement's Church. The church was full of supplies of food, water and toiletries that people had donated. We sat and had a cup of tea and a sandwich together. It was the first time that we had eaten since the night before.

21. We had lived on the Estate for nearly 20 years. Thankfully we didn't have any close friends who died in the Tower. We did recognise many of the people who died. I recognised Jessica Urbano Ramirez on the news. It was shocking to see her face on the news and to find out that she had died in the Tower. I had often seen her around the Estate with her family.

22. There were so many terrible images from that night that have stayed with me such as the family in the window who just disappeared and the fireman with the burnt neck. , I'll never forget those horrible images.

#### Aftermath

23. We couldn't go back to the property following the fire. For one thing there were lots of issues with the gas and electricity supply to the properties in the Walkways.

However I knew even once those issues were resolved I could not go back to the property. I am still too traumatised by what I saw that night. We have been in temporary accommodation ever since the fire.

24. Three weeks later, I went back to the property to water the plants on the balcony. While we were there we heard someone shouting 'fire, fire'. When we opened the door there was smoke in the hallway. I had to run out the building and past a neighbour's flat which had a fire in it. The fire was put out quickly but it brought back all the awful memories of that night.

25. My children were supposed to come back and stay at our home a month after the fire. They couldn't come because we were so unsettled because of the fire. They waited until November to visit. They had been very scared when they heard about the fire. It was all over the [REDACTED] news. We got lots of calls from friends and family in Portugal who had heard about the fire and were worried.

#### Impact

26. The day after the fire, I was coughing a lot. I think it was from all of the smoke that had been in the air. At one point when we were watching the fire initially, it had been hard to breathe because of all the smoke in the air.

27. [REDACTED]

28. Things have not been the same since the fire. I don't sleep as well anymore and have flashbacks and nightmares every week. I also feel that I don't want to socialise as much as I used too before the fire. My husband and I live a very quiet life now. I never want to return to my old flat which I lived at for 18 years of my life and called my home.

29.



30. I am a lot more aware of my surroundings now. I look to see where the fire escape is as soon as I go somewhere. One day the fire alarm went off in the middle of the night and I was so scared.

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

Signed: *Isabel Ranito*

Dated: *18-05-2018*