

Witness Statement of: Kim Monte

No. of statement: 1

Exhibits:

Date of statement: 6 June 2018

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF KIM MONTE

I, KIM MONTE, will say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on Tuesday 13th June into the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017. I make this statement for the purpose 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. My address is [REDACTED] Barandon Walk, London, W11 1WL. I live there with my son [REDACTED]. It is a three bedrooms flat. The windows in my flat look out onto Grenfell Road.

14th June

3. On 13th June I went to bed early at around 8pm. My son, who lives with me, had gone out. I was in the house alone when I went to bed. I woke up at around 1.10am when I heard a sound from outside my flat. It sounded like a piece of machinery; it was a crashing sort of sound. I thought it was workmen. I did not realise that it was still the middle of the night. I thought it was about 6am. I remember that I thought, 'don't tell me these work men are starting so early!'

4. I looked out of my bedroom window but I saw nobody outside. I then looked to my left and I saw a stationary fire engine on the corner of Grenfell Road.. I wondered why the fire engine was there and was not moving. I was waiting to see if it would move on. I could not see anyone out on the road. Grenfell Road was quiet. I went out of my front door and I looked out onto the Walkway. The Walkway was quiet. I put my slippers on and I went down the Walkway to see what was going on, leaving my door on the latch.
5. As I walked onto the Walkway, I then saw people running behind me. I saw two of my neighbours, Youssef and Lubli. They said there was a fire in Grenfell Tower. They were running and they looked panicked. They did not stop as they ran past me. I thought these young men were always so polite, so it must be dangerous if they did not even stop to speak to me.
6. I quickened my pace to follow behind them. I came out of the Walkway on the corner of Grenfell Tower near the 'Brambles house'. I looked up at the Tower and I saw a small fire coming out of a window of a flat, to the right hand side of the building. The fire was coming out of the window and it was going up to the next flat above it. At that point I thought that this was a big fire. I saw people were coming out of the Tower from the entrance. There were also people I saw who were pushing to go into the Tower. Some of the fire brigade there outside the Tower. I could only see one or two police officers in the area at that point.
7. I thought I should go back and get my son from the flat so I ran back up Grenfell Road, shouting up at my flat from outside, "There's a fire in Grenfell!" I went inside and woke up my son who said "what's the matter? What are you waking me up for?" He did not take it seriously at that point and he had to get up to work at 5am. Some of my neighbours came out onto their balconies to say, "Kim what's going on?" I told them all there was a fire in Grenfell Tower.
8. I put a top on, grabbed my phone and went back outside the flat. By now some of my neighbours were coming onto the Walkway.

9. I went onto the corner of Grenfell Road as you can see the Tower from there and I stayed there and watched the fire. At first the fire was just a little bit bigger than it had been when I left to go back to my flat, when it was coming out of the window and then to the flat above it. At one stage it looked to me like the fire brigade were going to get the fire under control, then suddenly the fire just went up the building like 'whoosh'. The fire spread so fast from that point. I just saw the whole building taking hold. Within 30 minutes, it went from about the bottom floor to top floor.
10. At first it looked like the fire brigade were not going into the building. I could see that there were firefighters outside. They were taking a long time. I think it was about 30 minutes until I saw the firefighters outside go into the Tower. People were screaming "why are they are not going in?"
11. The police officers arrived and they were pushing us back, saying "get back". They were also telling people to stay in their houses. I saw that the police were also evacuating people from the Tower as well. They started to shout, "has anybody got family in there, give us their phone numbers, we can give the fire brigade their number".
12. I was standing there on the corner of Grenfell Road as it turns towards Grenfell Tower; level with numbers 300 – 400 of the Walkway block. Bits of debris were falling off the Tower. You could see people on the top floor flashing the lights in their flat windows. I could see people shining lights on the top floor, and I could see people moving from room to room. I could see fire come into a room and then the people in the room moved to the next room. I could see light in that room shining.
13. I saw a group of young men screaming "Mum! My mum is in there!!" People were frantic. Some people were pushing past the police cordons. There were also two young girls I remember who were screaming, "Mum!" People were pushing past on the road to speak to their family who were inside the Tower. People from the Tower were screaming out from out of their windows. It was horrible to see. It was the most horrific experience of my life. I was in complete shock and disbelief at what was happening.

14. There was a young lady standing beside me. She went down on her knees and was screaming. She said to me that her aunt had locked herself in the bathroom as the fire was in her flat. I was trying to calm her down for a while as she was very distressed.
15. They were bringing survivors to the corner by the sports centre. I saw people coming out of the Tower who looked like they were suffering with smoke inhalation. I know that some of my neighbours ran into the Tower to save their families and they came out with smoke inhalation. I remember another local resident called Jo Delaney who was shouting at people saying, "people listen, go into your houses, get blankets, bring bottles of water, the survivors will need them".
16. Another man was shouting to someone in the Tower "I don't care if there's smoke, get out, get out". It felt so surreal to hear these people screaming out from the Tower and people screaming at them to get out. People lost their minds that night, it was a tragedy.
17. People outside watching were screaming and crying with hands over their ears. It was pandemonium. No one knew what they were doing. I didn't think that the fire brigade knew what they were doing. The police officers did not know what they were doing. I saw one man running towards the Tower with a mattress. I do now know if he was planning to tell people to jump or what. I didn't see him after this.
18. People around me were saying is that someone had jumped from the Tower. It was dark so it was difficult to see. Two young boys said that they would go over and have a look to see if a person had jumped. They went off from where I was standing and then came back and said, "don't go and look, it is a man who jumped, don't look". I could then see the man who had jumped. He was lying on the grass, which is not that near bottom of Tower. He must have jumped from very high up. We were saying that we needed to cover him up because he was just lying there. The police came and blocked off the scene.
19. I felt helpless, and guilty that I could not do anything to help. I wanted to help people but there was nothing I could do. At one stage I saw a man hanging out of a window on the Tower. I saw him then go back inside again through the window.

20. When the fire took hold of the Tower, it looked like the devil was raging in the fire. I know this might sound crazy, but it looked haunting. All you could see was a huge fire in whole of building. I thought to myself, how is anyone surviving in that? How are you finding these people? I was in total disbelief. The fire was some funky orange and some funky yellow colour. As the fire was going up the building, I could see and hear windows exploding, and then debris would fall down the Tower, causing people on the ground to scream.
21. I rang my granddaughter who lives on another walk. I told her to tell her parents that Grenfell Tower is on fire. My son came and found me and he said "mum let's move away from here". This was because the debris was falling from the Tower. I could still see people waving from out the windows of the Tower. A lot of smoke was going up into the air. It was this thick black smoke. It smelt really bad. It smelt of chemicals. I do not know how someone could run into that smoke.
22. The next minute my other son called, who does not live with me, and he said that I should come to his house, and not to stay outside in case anything happened to me. I walked round to my son's flat on [REDACTED] at around 2am to 2.30am. I went and stood on his balcony, which is on the roof of the building. Everyone in the family was there with me, even my grandchildren were out of bed. My youngest granddaughter could not look and she was screaming as her friend Nur-Huda was in the Tower. She was ringing Nur-Huda's number but she was not answering her phone. She became hysterical. We could not do anything to help. My son's friend Yasin and a few other people he knew were in the Tower as well.
23. By this time the fire had gone all round and engulfed everywhere around the top of the Tower. I called my friend Diane and my niece and they came to my son's house. I could not move. I was in shock. I watched for hours.
24. In the morning we walked around to The Rugby Portobello Club to see if my granddaughter's friend got out the Tower alive. There was no news on them.

25. I have been through some things in my life, but nothing was worse than this night. Nothing was worse than seeing this horror and watching people die. Words cannot explain how it was that night. It was the saddest night of my life.

26. We all knew on the night that it must have been the cladding that had caused the fire to spread so fast like it did. I have lived on the estate for 27 years and I have witnessed fires in Grenfell Tower before the cladding was put on the Tower. There was a fire in the Tower where a whole flat burned out and the fire even came out the window of the flat, but the fire did not spread beyond the flat.

Aftermath

27. I know lots of people from the area who died in the fire, but no close friends or family. I knew a Caribbean man called Moses who had lived there for years who died. Yasin used to come to my home with my son and eat dinner. He and his family died. My granddaughter's friend Nur-Huda died. There was also a young lady called Khadija from the local school who died.

28. I feel a great sense of loss in my community, which I feel has been destroyed. Lots of people that I would see around the area are not there any more. Ladies that I would see passing by to take their children to the nearby school have left. You become familiar with faces that you see over time. There are many that I stopped seeing after the fire.

29. I don't wish at this stage to go into a lot of detail about how the fire has impacted my life but it has affected me and my family. I feel highly stressed all the time and I get frustrated and anxious really quickly now. [REDACTED]


[REDACTED] I feel like the fire has changed the whole community.

30. In the aftermath of the fire I was not allowed to go back into my building. I initially stayed at my friend Diane's house for three days. Then I heard from other residents that I could go to the Westway Centre and they would put me in a hotel. I went to the Westway Centre and me and my family were given temporary accommodation in a hotel in West London. I am still living in this hotel as I have not yet been allowed to move back into my home which has been difficult for me.

Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true.

I am willing for the statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry's website

Signed: 

Dated: 6/6/2018