

Witness Statement of: **Mohamed Ragab**
No. of statement: **1**
Exhibits: **0**
Date of statement: **26/05/18**

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MOHAMED RAGAB

I, Mohamed Ragab, of [REDACTED], will say as follows:

1. I am making this statement about Flat 204 Grenfell Tower, London, W11 ITG. This flat is where my nephew Hesham Rahman lived.

Background

2. I have strong connections with Grenfell Tower. I lived in Grenfell Tower from 1982 until I moved to my current flat in 1995, which is only a 5 minute walk from the Tower. I worked for 20 years as an Administrative Officer for the Tenant Management Organisation of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea before retiring on 1 January 2010.
3. Hesham moved into Grenfell Tower in 2012 but he had lived in the local area since he moved to the UK in 1987. My sister Shafika has raised him since he was a small child and we both used to see him frequently, especially while he lived in Grenfell Tower. I used to speak with Hesham every day before the fire. The last time I spoke to him was on 13 June 2017, the day before the fire.

The night of the fire

4. On 14 June 2017 at around 2.45am I received a call from my sister Shafika Rabab. I was at home in bed asleep at the time. She told me there was a fire at Grenfell Tower. I was immediately worried for Hesham who lives in the Tower. I got out of bed, got

- dressed and made my way to her address, which is close by to Grenfell Tower and only a 2 minute walk from my flat. As I left my house I saw that there was a big fire coming from the fourth floor of the Tower. I was completely shocked at the size of the fire. I thought, 'how is this possible? How can this be happening?' I was really desperate to find out if Hesham was OK.
5. I found Shafika outside her house. She told me she had already called Hesham and spoken to him. After I arrived she called Hesham again and spoke to him for around two or three minutes. I heard her telling him to get out of the flat. She told me Hesham would not move from his flat as the police had told him to stay put and they would come and get him.
 6. Hesham has two mobile phones. I called Hesham myself at 3.33am on his 07956278913 number as we had not heard from him since Shafika had called him around 15 minutes before. There was no answer. This made me really anxious as I could see that the fire was getting bigger and was spreading. I hoped desperately that he had been saved and was in an ambulance at the bottom of the tower. Me and Shafika were both going mad with worry and we did not know what to do. Shafika was crying and screaming.
 7. I decided to leave Shafika to try and to go closer to the Tower to find out what was going on and to see if Hesham had managed to get out of the building. I could not get anywhere near the Tower. There are two routes to access the Tower, but the police were blocking both routes. I saw ambulances near the Tower and people being pushed in wheelchairs to the ambulances so they could be taken to hospital. I also saw around 10 – 15 fire brigade vehicles near the Tower. I tried to get past the police to the fire brigade so that I could find out whether Hesham would be rescued. The police would not let me past and told me to stay out. I shouted at them that my nephew was in the Tower but they did not provide me with any information. I felt completely helpless.
 8. After unsuccessfully trying to get information I returned to Shafika who was still outside her house. At 5.43am I called Hesham again on 07956278913 and again there was no answer. I then tried to call him on his other mobile number of 07508122231 at 05.44am. Again there was no answer. I was really panicking now, as it had been a hours since we had heard from Hesham.



9. It was a very long night for me and Shafika. We did not know what we were watching as we looked at the building on fire, as we did not know if Hesham had made it out of the building. It was worse than anything I could have imagined. I still hoped Hesham had made it out of the building, as he had told Shafika the police would come and get him. However we had not heard anything and so we were both tearing ourselves apart with worry.

Aftermath of the fire

10. The day after the fire we saw one of Hesham's friends, Anna, who had been speaking with him on the phone until 3.30am on the night of the fire. She told us if we still had not heard from him then he had not made it. We did not believe her.
11. In the week after the fire I went around visiting three of the hospitals in the area to ask if they had treated anyone of Hesham's description. I went to Charing Cross Hospital, Westminster and Chelsea Hospital and St Mary's Hospital. I had visited all of these hospitals within around five days after the fire. Unfortunately each of the hospitals told me they had not treated a patient matching Hesham's name or description.
12. For the week after the fire my family was left waiting to hear news from the police on what had happened to Hesham. We had to watch smoke coming from the Tower for three days after the fire. It was a very bad feeling. We were all so anxious to hear news from Hesham, but no news was coming. We kept asking the police for updates but they had not heard from Hesham.
13. Although the night of the fire was awful and depressing, it went on like this for around three months after afterwards. Our fear was possibly worse than the night of the fire the longer we went without knowing what had happened to Hesham. We were intensely worried and constantly on the look out for news of Hesham. We did not know whether the fire brigade had made it up to his flat to rescue him. How could we know? My feeling was that maybe he was lying somewhere unconscious and no one knew where he was. It was an ongoing horror for me and my family. As the weeks passed the pain became even worse for us and we were more scared for Hesham. It was a nightmare to go through this.


14. It was not until about 11 weeks after the fire that it was confirmed to us that Hesham had died in the fire, when the police informed us that they had identified Hesham's remains. We had a very hard time over the following months. I had a great feeling of depression. I struggled to sleep for a long time after the fire and I still have nightmares about the night of the fire. I live near the Tower and so am reminded every day about what happened. I cannot do anything about where I live.

15. I think about Hesham every day. I used to see him so often that I still have the feeling that he is with us.

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: Mohamed . A . H . Ragab


DATE: 26/5/18