

Witness Statement of: Philip King

No. of statement: 1

Exhibits: 1

Date of statement: 4 June 2018

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF PHILIP KING

I, PHILIP KING will say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on 14th June 2017. I make this statement 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 have lived in flat [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk for the past 15 years. I am the sole tenant.
3. I am currently unemployed. I am a semi-retired musician.
4. My first floor flat has one bedroom with a balcony that overlooks Hurstway Walk. You can't see the Tower from the flat but it is close to where I live. I love the flat and its location. The flat has great views and is in a really good location. I think its an excellent flat. From the flat, you can see out onto Hurstway Walk.

Community

5. I don't feel part of a community as such but it is a place where everyone knew of everyone. You would bump into people you knew all the time, including people who lived in Grenfell Tower.
6. I have never been inside Grenfell Tower, other than the time I went to the ground floor of the Tower where there was an office space. I became a member of the "TMO" so I could get more involved on deciding on issues in the area. Becoming a member meant that I could vote on issues and I was a representative. The meetings took place in the office of the Tower but then it was moved to a new space in Hurstway Walk. I went to that office once before it was moved.
7. I know that the Tower was refurbished two years ago and from what I know the people who lived there were happy living there.

14th June

8. On the night of 13th June, I went to bed at 11:30pm. I knew it was that time because there was a BBC news programme which comes on coming up to midnight. I was asleep but then I was woken up at 12:45am by a noisy commotion outside my flat. I could hear this noise because I sleep with the window open which means I see and hear everything going on outside.
9. I was still half asleep, but I went to the window to have a look. There were people running and shouting, and at first, I thought it could be a fight. They were running up Hurstway Walk saying 'oh no'. People were running in the direction of Grenfell Tower. I opened my door to the balcony and it was then that I could smell smoke. I put on my shoes and tracksuit right away and I headed out and went towards Grenfell Tower. To get there, I went down Hurstway Walk and followed the walk towards the Tower, so I turned right and right again.
10. More and more people were coming out of their flats and by now there was a lot of noise and everyone was heading towards the Tower.
11. When I reached the Tower, I could see the flames on the 4th floor, on the left side of the building. I was standing on Hurstway Walk which leads straight to where the

Tower is. The first time I saw the fire it was going straight up the building. I couldn't believe it. The fire looked like it had begun on the 4th or 5th floor rather than at the ground. At this point there were no flames at the top of the Tower, but the flames were going up the left side of the building if you were standing looking at the Tower in front, on Hurstway Walk. The flames were yellow/orange and were going straight up the East side of the building which I witnessed for the first ten minutes before the police came.

12. The flames were going from the 4th floor rising up the cladding. I wasn't sure it was cladding that was burning, but I thought at the time it had to be because concrete just doesn't burn like this. I knew the cladding was on the building. I go past the Tower every day, and it seemed to be this but it was dark so I couldn't exactly tell. I thought at the time that it must be the cladding. Even at this stage I thought to myself that it was obvious the cladding was accelerating the flames because something was fuelling it, and concrete doesn't do that. I immediately began filming the scene on my phone, I have one film, it is 9 minutes long. I exhibit this to the statement at **PK/1**.
13. By now there were about 100 or so people around me where the school is, looking at the Tower. We were standing there, for about 10 minutes and the police turned up from walking down Hurstway Walk and said, "you have to go". I am not sure at this point what time it was, possibly 1:15am. I was standing there with other people however I didn't know anyone around me personally.
14. I didn't see any fire engines or police until about 10 minutes from that point. There were three fire engines on Hurstway Walk which I could see, but I could see they couldn't find where to go. They were driving around. I saw the fire engines knocked trees over on their way through to get towards the Tower.
15. On the other side of the street, the riot police had turned up. The police were forcibly keeping people back from coming down Hurstway Walk.
16. I appreciated how serious the fire was in the first few minutes of seeing it. In 10 minutes of me being there watching it, there was an increase of the fire on the building. When I arrived, it was covering the 4th or 5th floor on the left side. I saw the first ten minutes because when I got there, it was at the 4th floor, and then I saw it

rise up, in a straight line to nearly the top, to the 16th floor. I didn't see it spread from this point. I didn't think it could be contained from seeing this as it was going up the whole building.

17. I didn't stay around after, I don't know what happened. I didn't see the firefighters responding to the fire as such, I just saw them come down Hurstway Walk from my balcony. However, from what I saw I did think to myself, people should be evacuated from the Tower or there is no way they would survive. The flames reached the 16th floor of the Tower in the ten minutes I was standing there.
18. People outside watching were reluctant to leave when the police turned up. The riot police had to disburse them down back to the other side of the street, but they were talking about people they knew in the Tower. I heard a person say that their cousins were inside. They wanted to know their family and friends were ok. They wanted to go to the Tower, but the riot police wanted everyone on the other side of the street for crowd control.
19. As soon as the police came, I listened to what the police were telling us to do. The police were telling people outside to go back home. I immediately went back to my flat. The riot squad weren't there yet – one policeman turned up and said to go back to your flat and I did as he had asked.
20. I saw the fire spreading but I didn't stay around because I was told by the police to go home and because I didn't want to stick around and see the Tower burning. I was thinking, this is a joke, I just can't believe what I am seeing. I thought as I saw the flames go up, these people have to get out, they have to get out right now or they won't survive. I have heard about people throwing themselves out of the Tower and things like this but I didn't see that myself because I was not there.
21. I returned to my flat alone and I could see that outside on Hurstway Walk the riot police were having to keep everyone from going any further down Hurstway Walk.
22. I was back inside my flat at 1.45am. I just watched what was happening from my window. I also stood outside on my balcony. Even from the balcony, I could feel the heat coming from the flames on the Tower and I could see stuff blowing off the

Tower and going everywhere. I thought it was part of the cladding, but it was completely burnt out but still had form to it. Debris had been blowing off in the air but it didn't make me cough and I wasn't injured. I couldn't see the Tower from my flat or balcony, I couldn't see people from there at the Tower I could only see the people below on Hurstway Walk.

23. I went back inside my flat and I looked outside from the window. I could see that the whole Walkway was blocked off by the police. I turned on the TV and watched the reporting of the event.

24. I carried on watching what was happening outside my window. I used my phone to film things such as the helicopters and what the police were doing. I can provide 10 short videos of my coverage of the fire and the time after. I saw more fire engines come down Hurstway Walk.

25. Some of my friends were calling me to check that I was okay. I didn't feel threatened at all as I was now back in my flat and I felt safe, my flat is a distance from what was happening I could see what I thought was the cladding and it was burning, and bits of stuff was blowing over in the air.

26. I didn't sleep at all that night, it was just impossible. At around 11:30am, I had a one hour nap but then I had to get my friend's dog, which I had agreed to look after, at 1pm. I left my flat and I went out down Bramley Road and looked at the Tower from a different angle from the supermarket on Bramley Road. I was watching people handing out water bottles. Everyone around me looked like they were in a dazed confusion and I could see the media circus out there. There were camera crews covering the Tower from all angles. The helicopters were still circling the area.

27. I looked at the Tower and the fire was out, but the Tower was still smoking. I went past the pub towards St Marks Road, so I could see the Tower in full.

28. I then walked right past the Tower on the way to pick up my friends' dog. I didn't want to look up, but I did and saw the blackness and the smoke coming out. This made me feel lucky, but also feel a sense of loss and sad at the same time.

Aftermath

29. I knew people in Grenfell Tower, not closely but everyone knew everyone. It was a community and you'd bump into people frequently around the place. That's the kind of community it was.
30. One person I know lost his daughter. I saw him a month before the fire. His daughter who was 13 years old. I knew him, from the community. His name was Ramirez Urbano and he was a bus driver. His daughter was called Jessica Urbano.
31. There was another person I knew called Moses, an older West Indian man, and he didn't make it out.
32. I don't at this stage wish to discuss the aftermath of the fire. I can do so in a statement I make for Phase 2. I don't wish either to detail at this stage the impact that this has had on me, other than to say that I did feel in shock, like it was something not really happening. That's how I felt on the day. I didn't have to move out from my flat though like other people had to.
33. After the fire there were a lot of people coming to see the Tower. It was disaster tourism. People were coming from everywhere to take photos of the Tower. This was so insensitive to the people who died and the community. This went on for months. I heard local people shout at people taking photos. It was very insensitive.

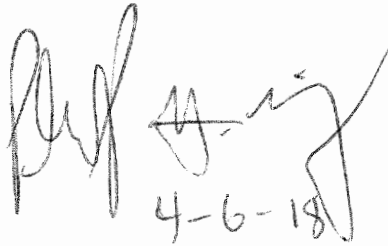
Statement of truth

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:

Dated:


4-6-18