

IN THE MATTER OF THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE DISASTER

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SAJAD JAMALVATAN

I, Sajad Jamalvatan, DOB [REDACTED] 1995, previously of Flat 10 Grenfell Tower, Grenfell Road, London, W11 1TG, WILL SAY as follows:

Background

I moved into Grenfell Tower in August 2016. We lived on the 3rd floor in flat 10. The flat consisted of three bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bathroom. On our floor there were three other flats, 7, 8 and 9. Our flat overlooked the school and the leisure center. It was situated on the north east corner of the Tower.

1. At the time of the fire, I lived there with my mother Mahboubeh Jamalvatan (dob [REDACTED] 1962) and my sister Sahar Jamalvatan (dob [REDACTED] 1993) My first language is Farsi, I also speak, read and write English fluently. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] My Mum is registered disabled; she has great difficulty walking and cannot walk unaided. [REDACTED] she often has to rely on a wheel chair. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Moving into Grenfell Tower

2. We moved into Flat 10 in August 2016 we rented the flat from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. I loved living in Grenfell Tower. We had previously lived in temporary accommodation which was cold, damp and was over run with mice. We had to wait some months to move into the flat as the Council was refurbishing it. My Mum decorated the flat beautifully and to a very high standard. We had fantastic views from our large windows; the flat was spacious and light, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

3. When we moved into Grenfell Tower we were not given any information about fire safety. I was aware that the Tower had a fire alarm system but as far as I know since we moved into our flat in August 2016 there never was a check on the system. No one spoke to us about fire safety at all. I think that there was an alarm on the staircase and on each floor but I have no idea at all where that alarm was situated. No one ever discussed fire safety with me. We never ever had a fire evacuation drill or other emergency drills. Outside of the flats for example on the ground floor there was a notice in English telling you to stay in your flat if there was a fire in the Tower. I do not recall ever receiving any letter from the TMO informing us of fire safety measures.
4. There was no central fire alarm, the only alarm that I am aware of was a fitted fire alarm in my kitchen and I do not know if it was powered by a battery or electricity. No one ever tested the alarm and I was never given any instruction about it.

Living in Grenfell Tower

5. As you entered the front door of our flat, Flat 10, there was a small utility cupboard on the left side. My bedroom was opposite the front door. On the right of my bedroom was Sahar's bedroom. Sahar's bedroom was opposite the bathroom and toilet. As you walked out of our bedrooms there was a corridor/hall on your left, If you carried on down the corridor, there was a door to an open plan kitchen and sitting room were on the left-hand side. If you continued down the corridor at the end was my Mum's bedroom. Floor plan attached (SJ/1).
6. The flat didn't have a balcony and the windows could not be opened fully in order to be used as escape route. The main door of the flat was self-closing. On leaving the flat you could see a rubbish chute on your left next to a storage area and beside the storage there was a staircase and on your right there were two lifts. The staircase and the lifts were opposite to each other.
7. If you went a few steps down the stairs on my floor you could see a door which was self-closing and led to the main staircase. By using the staircase and going down you reached the bottom of the stairs there was a door on the left side to the main entrance

and the on the right side there was a door to the outside of the building to the back. The main door to the Tower was an automatic door which was installed about a month before the fire.

8. My front door was not replaced during the time I lived at Grenfell Tower and there was no damage to it. It had two hinges on the side. There was a gap between the bottom of the door and the floor and there was a draft seal fitted. We had a letterbox which sprung shut after being opened. All rooms in my flat had doors which opened and closed.
9. The windows had drafts even when shut. The drafts allowed dirt and small pieces of rubbish to enter the flat, especially during stormy weather. I did not make any complaints about this.
10. I did not have any problems with the electricity supplies in the flat and I do not remember anyone ever coming to check the electrical installation. We had a working extractor fan in the bathroom.
11. I could regularly smell cooking from other people's flats. It was often a strong smell and I don't know how it entered our flat.
12. Noise also travelled between flats. I could hear noise from other people's flats in all rooms. I could hear the sound of loud conversations.
13. Often one of the lifts was out of order. It would usually take a few days for it to be fixed and when we only had one lift you had to wait a long time for it to arrive at your floor. Sometimes I used the stairs, if I was very late for college and or work then I would run down the stairs. On one occasion I was stuck in the lift for over 30 minutes when it broke down. I was in the lift with the family from Flat 8 on our floor.
14. I do not recall the lights ever going out on our floor.

15. The chute was right next to our front door. The odour from the chute was most unpleasant as people did not insert their rubbish into the chute they just left it hanging with some inside and outside the chute. There was regularly a problem with people leaving rubbish in the communal landings. As I describe below, I complained about this to the TMO but nothing was ever done about it. The offices of the TMO was approximately 1 minute away from the Tower, I often went into the office to complain about the rubbish hanging out of the chute.
16. During my time at the property I made around 7 or 8 complaints to the TMO about issues including noises, the rubbish chute and the smell of rubbish as from time to time rubbish was left to rot in the hallway. I made all these complaints in person at the TMO office. They did not take the complaints seriously and did not do anything about it.
17. The lifts were far too slow, they took a long time to open and shut. I usually used the stairs, although I found them narrow and steep. My Mum depended upon the lifts as she was not able physically to walk down the stairs. I also complained about dogs in the block, leaving their waste in the building. The replies we received from the TMO were to thank us for our concern and they would look into our complaint. We never ever got a satisfactory reply.

June 13/14 2017

18. On the night of the 13th June 2017, my Mum was not in a good mood, she was not sleeping properly, and she had nightmares that something awful was going to happen although she could not say what.
19. My sister Sahar and I decided that we would go to the cinema, we did ask Mum to come with us but she said she would go to bed and try and get some sleep. We decided to go to a late cinema show. We left the flat at 11 pm approximately. We went to see The Mummy at Westfield Vue cinema. We came out of the cinema at approximately 1.00 a.m. As I was coming down the staircase my Mum phoned me and said there was a Fire in the block. I could hear people screaming. The phone then cut out.

20. I tried to call back to see what had happened. There was no answer. I ran as fast as I could back home. I could feel my heart pumping almost out of my body. I was yelling at my sister to run. It took me just 7 mins normally it would take about 20 minutes to walk from Grenfell Tower to the Westfield Vue cinema.
21. As I came towards Grenfell I could feel the heat of the fire on my face, I could hear the noise, people shouting, panic in the air. I turned right from the tube station opposite me and turned right again at the bus station on Bramley Road heading towards the Tower on Station Walk. I could see the fire from the 4th floor to the 17th floor, the Tower was not fully on fire but one corner was completely on fire. I actually counted the number of floors the fire was blazing on because my friend Yasin (El Wahabi) was living on the 21st floor and I was concerned for him.
22. I was looking for my Mum I was so worried as to where she was as I was not sure if in fact she had left the building. I had to go under the building; I had to run quickly as debris was falling down from the Tower. There was no access to Grenfell by cars as the roads were closed. I could see water pumps and one fire engine at the base of the Tower.
23. I eventually found my Mum about 30 minutes after we got to Grenfell. I cannot be sure what time I found my Mum. It could have been about 1.40 a.m. I was so relieved to find her; she was with a group of people from the Tower.
24. The police were pushing people back trying to clear the area. They put barriers up as they thought the building was going to collapse and they wanted to ensure those of us outside the Tower were safe. I could hear people speaking on their mobile phones to their families in the tower. I was telling them to say to who ever was in their homes in the Tower that they needed to put wet towels on the floors under the doors to keep the fire out. They also needed to keep low. I recorded on my mobile 2 small videos of what I could see happening. I uploaded these to YouTube; both clips are in my name.
25. At about 2 a.m I heard an explosion on the other side of the building I am not really sure of the time. I assumed that it was an explosion I thought it was a gas bottle that exploded.

26. After that explosion I could see many windows were cracked. The noises were awful, much louder than before. The fire was expanding through out the building. We were now all being evacuated from the area. I could not see the Tower any more.
27. I got really worried because my friends were still trapped inside the building. I found a way through to get myself as near as possible to the building. It was an alley way to the leisure center where I could see the Tower more clearly, it was all in flames. I was not allowed to be there but felt I had to be as my friends were still inside and I wanted to see my friend Yasin and his family come out the door to safety. Sadly that never happened. My friend Yasin died in the fire.
28. I saw two people fall out of the windows as I was standing there and I thought of 9/11 as this was so like it. I was keeping myself very low as I knew that I should not have been there. I could not handle the distress and pain of the people and children shouting. I could see them behind the windows. I could see flash lights from their phones letting us know they were still waiting for help. I had an awful feeling that the people who were trapped were not going to get out. My heart was beating so rapidly and I was so afraid for all who were still in the building.
29. I went back to where my Mum was, she did not appear to be breathing. I shouted at anyone who would listen to me to "Help" "Help" – "my Mum is looking for her breath". I saw an ambulance and I was so lucky that someone was there to offer me an oxygen mask. I had to beg for it. Everyone including the ambulance personnel and firefighters all seemed so shocked and not sure what they were doing.
30. I gave my Mum the oxygen mask, so that she could breathe. There was an eerie silence in the street after a while. All of us knew how awful it was we had no words to describe what we were looking at and witnessing. I still have no words to describe properly what I saw on the night of the 14th June 2017. The images are printed inside of my head but I don't have the language to express it either in Farsi or English.
31. We all waited there until early morning hoping beyond hope that everyone would be rescued from the Tower alive. I saw this man who lived on the 4th floor in flat no.15. His name is Mehad and he lived opposite flat 16 where the fire originally started. He

spoke with me and described an incident that occurred earlier to him.

32. Mehad said that the man whose flat the fire started in knocked on his door with loads of bags in his hands. He was knocking to tell Mehad that there was a fire in his flat. Mehad said he could not believe there was so much fire coming from the man's flat. He said he was questioning why this man did not inform him much earlier in the night when the fire was small and just started, why wait for it to be out of control to knock his door. I found his account of that very unsettling, if it is true and I have no reason to believe that his account is untrue.

The days after the fire

33. At about 7 a.m. I was so upset, distressed as I just knew that people had died in the fire and a feeling of hopelessness enveloped me. I spoke with a fire fighter who told me that the fire was under control. I could still see the flames but there was also a lot of white smoke as well as the flames.

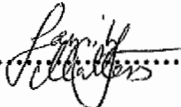
34. We left the scene of devastation and wreckage then and went to the Rugby Trust in Portobello where we stayed until about 6 pm when we were moved to the Tara Hotel. ■



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

35. I gave a statement to the police, in the week after the disaster. I was still in shock and disbelief; I cannot recall exactly what I told them but it will be very similar to this statement. I consent to my witness statement to the police being disclosed to the inquiry for use in evidence. I also took some videos of the fire and put them up on u-tube. I am willing to give evidence at the Inquiry.

I believe that the content of this witness statement is true.

Signed:.....
Dated:..... 17/4/2018.....

Sajad Jamalvatan

SJ/ 1, FLOOR PLAN

SAJAD JAMALVATAN, FLAT 10, 3RD FLOOR

