

Witness Statement of: Salah Duale

No of statement: 1

Exhibits:0

Date of Statement: 29 June 2018

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SALAH DUALE

I, SALAH DUALE, will say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on 14th June 2017. This statement is for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I intend to make a further statement for Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

Background

2. I moved to Flat 7 in Grenfell Tower on 10th June 2017. I moved in with my sons [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I had married my wife Hoden Ahmed on [REDACTED] 2017, but she was still living in her home in Woolwich. My mother, Maryan Ahmed, was staying with Hoden at the time we moved in to Grenfell Tower. We had planned for them to both move into Flat 7 with us on 15th June 2017. We had been living in temporary accommodation for around 10 years before finally being offered a permanent flat in Grenfell Tower by Kensington and Chelsea Council. We had been moved all around London by the Council – to [REDACTED], and other parts of West London. When this offer of permanent accommodation in Grenfell Tower came up, we were delighted. I thought we could finally have some stability, and that it could be somewhere the family could finally settle.

3. Flat 7 was a three bedroom flat on the South-East corner of the Tower. It was on the third floor. It was a nice, large flat, but as we had just moved in it was a mess and there were unpacked boxes everywhere.
4. I do not remember much about the flat itself because we had only been there for a few days.
5. I think there was a fire alarm in the kitchen, but I cannot be sure. It did not go off whilst we were in the flat.
6. There was a notice next to the lifts in the entrance area which said something about what to do in the case of a fire, but I cannot remember exactly what it said.
7. No one from the TMO or from the Council told us anything about fire safety or what to do if there was a fire after we had moved in. I was told that someone would be coming to visit within one month to talk about the flat and our tenancy. Obviously the fire happened before that was possible. I was given some leaflets with my tenancy agreement, but I did not have time to read through all of these documents before the fire and they were left in our flat in the Tower, so I don't know if any of these gave information about fire safety or anything else.
8. I do remember that the front door of our flat did not close shut automatically, - you had to push or pull it closed manually.

14 June

9. The day of 13th June 2017 had been relatively normal. I spent the day with my sons unpacking boxes and trying to get things sorted in the flat. I went to the Council's offices in the afternoon to get a parking permit. It was Ramadan, and so in the evening at around 9.30pm, [REDACTED] and I went to Al'Manaar Mosque together. It was about 10 minutes' walk from the Tower. After prayers ended at about 11.30pm, [REDACTED] went home. I went to a coffee shop

nearby to have coffee with a friend I knew locally called Ahmed Ali. We [REDACTED] had a little food and coffee.

10. After a little while in the coffee shop, we went our separate ways. Ahmed went back towards his home, and I walked back to the Tower, intending on going home to bed. Whilst I was on my way, I received a call from [REDACTED] telling me that there was a fire in the Tower, I think it was around 01:15am. He said that he and [REDACTED] had got out and that they were waiting around the bottom of the Tower. I did not know how serious the fire was at this point.
11. When I arrived at the Tower a few minutes later, I saw three fire engines around the bottom of the Tower, and people were congregating all around the base of the Tower. I saw [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] standing in the playground next to the Tower on the West side. I met with them and we just stood there and looked up at the building. When I arrived, the fire was not that big and was coming out of the window of a flat on the 4th or 5th floor. It was however burning upwards. The flames were orange, yellow and blue in different places. I tried to walk towards the Tower to get in so we could try to save some of our things, but my sons stopped me, saying that the fire was serious and that we should not go back inside.
12. After my arrival, the fire started to spread up the building quite rapidly. The fire looked like a tube burning up one side of the building. There were loud noises coming from the inside of the building – they sounded like explosions. I don't know what those noises were. It was a really shocking thing to see – I have never seen a fire like it before.
13. There was a firefighter shooting water at the fire from the ground, but it did not seem to be doing anything. The water looked to me to be coming out of the hose very slowly. There were a lot of fire fighters running around with hoses, going into the building. The fire was spreading so quickly. The three fire engines could not all get close enough to the building - there was one at the front, and a hose was being pulled from that by a firefighter spraying water

on the fire. It did not seem to be doing anything as the fire had already spread up the building – it seemed like it was already too late for the firefighters to be able to do anything by just spraying water on the bottom of the fire.

14. From when I arrived, debris was raining down from the Tower, where the fire was burning. There were large pieces of material falling off which were on fire. One of my sons filmed it, and gave the videos to the police.
15. We just stood there in shock, watching the fire and shouting for people to come out of the building. More and more firefighters and police officers arrived and after a little while – I am not sure how long – we were told by a police officer to get further away from the Tower and go towards the sports centre. Again after a short while we were told by another police officer to go towards the school, which we did. We were watching the fire all this time. It spread incredibly quickly and seemed to go up a few floors every four or five minutes. We moved further and further back as the fire got higher and more intense over the next hour or two. Even at around 50 metres or so away, flaming debris was falling down and hitting the ground close to us.
16. My sons and I did not know anyone who lived in the Tower as we had just moved in. We spoke to some people throughout the night, but most people were in shock or were looking for missing family members. We mostly stood there looking at the Tower and the fire spread. I cannot remember the exact timings of everything now, but do remember it spread up to the top of the Tower, and then wrap around and start coming down the other sides. I think by around 2:30am, there was fire all around the top of the building and was coming down each side. By this point you could really feel the heat coming off the fire – it was very hot. There was a lot of silver coloured smoke billowing off the Tower. We stood there shouting for people to come out of the Tower, and I remember seeing people really high up in the windows looking out and down below. Some of them were flashing lights down to us – I think probably to indicate that they were in their flats and needed rescuing.

17. I saw a lot of people coming out of the front of the Tower who were either escaping or being rescued. They all seemed to be really scared and in shock. I don't know how many people I saw coming out of the Tower, but it seemed to be quite a lot.
18. At one point, Ahmed Ali, who I had gone for coffee with earlier, came and found me. We spoke for a little while about the fire, and he wanted to check we were all OK.
19. Just after 2:30am, we went back to the Mosque for prayers. We came back from the Mosque at around 3.30am and spent the rest of the morning walking around the area by the school, looking at the Tower. I saw the fire gradually spread across and down each side of the Tower throughout the morning. I cannot remember timings very well from the night as so much was going on. I do remember that by the time we left again to go back to the Mosque – at around 6.30am – the whole building seemed to be wrapped in fire (apart from the bottom).
20. I went back to the Mosque with my sons, and after prayers, we agreed I would get in touch with Ahmed Ali, to see if my sons could stay with him. Ahmed agreed, and so my sons went to his house to stay. There was not room for me as well, so I stayed in the Mosque to sleep.
21. The Council called me in the afternoon on 14th June 2018 and told me that they would arrange for me to go to a hotel, so me, my sons and my mum were checked into a hotel later that day.

Impact

22. Watching the fire on 14th June 2018 was very difficult. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] I am not ready

to go into detail about the effect of witnessing the fire has had on me at this stage.

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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Salah Duale', written over a horizontal line.

Dated:

29 . 6 2018