

Witness Statement of: Tawqa Mutwali

No. of statement: 1

Exhibits:

Date of statement: 10.07.18

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF TAGWA MUTWALI

I, TAGWA MUTWALI will say as follows:-

1. I make this statement about the events of the night of 14th June 2017 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 had been living in Hurstway walk since 10 Sept 2008. It was always a nice area with lots of community spirit and feeling e.g. Moroccans, Eritreans and many people who lived next door, plus schools and shops. Everyone knows everyone and also there were many things we would do and celebrate together such as Eid, all together. Our flat was on the 2nd floor. There were 2 bedrooms there and you go up by stairs, there is a terrace, kitchen and a sitting room.
3. I lived in that flat with my husband and four children. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] They,
unfortunately, had friends who died in the fire.

14th June

4. At around 12:40am I heard someone call for help. I looked through the window but couldn't find anyone, so I moved back.
5. At 1:30am I heard, 'help, help' and someone was running around without shoes. It was Ramadan at this time.
6. My husband was the one who went downstairs to have a look. I called a friend as she can see the tower from her flat on the 16th floor in the block opposite. She said there was a fire in the Tower and I told my sister to call my friend, Rhania, who lives in the Tower. I wanted her to tell her to get out. Rhania wasn't able to go out; she said on the phone that the fire brigade had told them to stay where they were.
7. Rhania posted a video onto her Facebook and she told everyone. She videoed her neighbour and everyone, the smoke was very heavy. I am not sure what happened to her Facebook account since, or to the video there. The stairs were full of smoke, but they were not able to go down as the fire brigade still told her to stay where they were.
8. They all believed they would be able to get out and that they would be helped. I tried to call my friend, Fouzia, but there was no answer from her or her daughter. Someone else tried and they called her, she had been told to put a wet towel around her nose to not breathe the smoke. I tried to call them to tell them to go out by themselves but they were saying that the fire brigade had said not to.
9. My husband went out to see what was happening with the fire. In seconds, it had risen from the 4th floor to the 6th floor and was spreading. The police came to evacuate our building at 3am.
10. My husband had taken the children outside and had left them with a neighbour. He then came back and tried to take the other from me from upstairs, but a police officer had said to him that he can't go up as it was too dangerous etc. I started to cry and the

police asked how we could leave our child alone. That wasn't true though; everyone we knew was there and was with him.

11. Everyone was so confused about what was happening. Police were not explaining anything but you could look from the entrance and could see the fire. The fire continued for more than 22 hours.
12. St Clements Church was taking the children in. They fed them and gave them entertainment. Before that, we were all just in the road.
13. My two daughters stayed outside and they saw a woman throw a baby from the window. This affected my youngest daughter very badly.
14. We were all preparing as it was Ramadan, but my daughter got asthma from the smoke that was all around outside. I could see the reflection from the window of the flat and I just couldn't believe there was a fire.
15. I had initially thought maybe someone had put something in the oven and left it burning. It was summer and we had windows open. There was lots of debris coming into the balcony from Oxford Gardens, even from the school which was open. It was Thursday and everyone was in the street and couldn't believe what had happened.
16. There are two entrances to the building. They are on Bramley Road and Whitchurch Road. The children had gone off with a big group of friends. We went looking for them, but we couldn't find our son and he hadn't gone to the Church.
17. My daughters had seen someone jump from the window.
18. My sister had said smoke was coming into the building and the neighbour said to close the door because of the smoke. It was grey when we went outside.
19. No-one was injured by the debris, but it was very hot, and we were still affected by the smoke. One neighbour tried to go out without much clothing on as it was so hot.

20. Bramley Road was closed but the road at the back, we thought maybe we could go via there. Two teachers came out to the outside bit and ran to the school, they were crying. The school sent two staff, the PE Teacher and [REDACTED], to the Church to see if anyone needed anything.
21. At 3am they said you can go inside and my husband said it would be fine to go back in but my youngest daughter, [REDACTED], refused to go inside again. My husband said, let her play, she may forget. Breakfast for us was around 6/6.30am and my eldest daughter was in complete shock, her sugar levels dropped and I told her she had to eat something.
22. We were waiting from 3am until 3pm the next day and we went to the Church to see the children. One staff member, Leo, said that if I was not happy to stay in the flat she would try and help. She tried to speak to the council. My children said they were not going back. Leo tried to reassure them and told them nothing will happen to them, but my youngest daughter said, no, look, the fire is just there.
23. I felt I couldn't trust any of the authorities, the police nor the fire brigade. My friend saw at 12/1am someone waving from the Tower. My friend was in the opposite tower, and she called 999. They said they will try to save them.
24. Leo called the council and all they said were sorry, and that the hotels are all fully booked. She then sent my [REDACTED] year old daughter, [REDACTED], to her sister's house.
25. There was a helicopter and sirens in the morning. I phoned school to tell them about it all and say my children wouldn't be in, but they couldn't hear because of the commotion. People were shouting and crying for their friends and relatives.

Friends in the Tower

26. Both of my daughters had a friend from the Tower, Mahdi - he passed in the fire and both of my daughters went off with people and other children and adults to see if they

could help anyone. All of these kids were looking for their friends and whilst doing so, they saw a man jump.

27. On the 23rd floor I had a very close friend, Rhania [REDACTED] One day it was her daughter's birthday and she invited my daughter as she was doing it at her home but then this for some reason this didn't go ahead. I also invited her for tea one time but she said no let's leave it until another day. This was just 3 months before fire.
28. Some of my neighbours were offered temporary accommodation but they wanted to go back to their flats as their building had been refurbished and they just wanted to go home.
29. I had friends who passed in the Tower. Two of these were Fathir Esenoussi, who was Sudanese, and her daughter and son. Also Rania Brahim and her two daughters. I used to see these people every day as there was a small park and gardens and we walked to leisure centre.
30. After seeing the news, we then knew about the cladding. Communal heating was on in the estates – in the Tower and the walkways, and my friend had told me however, in the summer months, now it's very hot. Two months before the fire, Rhania had told me it was unbearably hot. She put the heating off. It was possibly like that in there because of the cladding.
31. Rhania's flat was much hotter than ours; it was hotter on higher floors. She was on the 23rd floor. The swimming pool was very hot also.
32. I remember that Rhania invited my sister, [REDACTED] over one time and she said, 'Now if something happens, how can I get down from there?' They laughed about it at that time but then this happened.
33. A close friend, Randa is a Tower survivor [REDACTED]
I used to meet her and we would have Eritrean coffee together. After swimming lessons we always used to come out to the garden to meet. If you went outside from

the leisure centre, there are gardens where you could have a drink of tea and there was also a playground there right near the Tower and children would always play.

34. They moved Randa [REDACTED] into a new building, but then she said that some of the people there didn't want them to be there.

Aftermath

35. I couldn't go there and look at the Tower for so long afterwards, for nine months afterwards, and when I go now, I have flashbacks.
36. When my two daughters saw a woman throw a baby out of the window during the fire, it affected my youngest daughter, [REDACTED] very badly. She was scared she was going to also be thrown from the window. She would say, 'Am I also going to be thrown from the window?' She didn't understand and thought I would do the same with her. It was difficult to explain this wasn't so, and what was going on.
37. My daughter, [REDACTED], has slept walked since the Thursday after the fire up until September. She tried to run from something when we were all staying in a hotel and that's why we eventually got given a serviced apartment. [REDACTED] can hide her feelings more, but it's different with [REDACTED]. She was sleepwalking [REDACTED] She tried to run out the door in the hotels, in the Mercure and in the Travelodge and that scared me. If I didn't wake, what would happen? I tried to stay awake during the night as it was very dangerous, especially in the Mercure, as going out of the door would lead on to the road. [REDACTED] screams about her friend Mahdi and screams that she doesn't want to die. Then she thinks ghosts may exist there if she goes back to our house. Also in the Cromwell Road hotel, I had to put something at the back of the door. I told Leo and she said to do this so that if she pulled the door, we can hear the noise.
38. The after effects were very bad, [REDACTED] had some support from school and talked to one of the team there as she couldn't cope with the situation and then the school brought a specialist to speak to my daughter. My eldest daughter also went to see 'Place to Be' which was something at school offering support.

39. We all received help from the church and then in turn, we had help from the council with temporary accommodation, but they then decided to put everyone into serviced apartments.
40. My children became different after such an ordeal, and I almost couldn't believe these were the same children.
41. The thing I miss is the sense of community that we all had there – everyone knew someone and we all got on, we all stuck together and met up and it was nice to see all different nationalities playing together, meeting together, lots of people from different countries in the same place. That is all lost now.
42. There is a lot more that I would like to say about the history and background of the fire and the aftermath. I understand that I will be allowed an opportunity to give a further statement about these matters at a later date. I would like to make a further statement as part of Phase 2 to discuss these issues.

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 for it to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:



Dated:

10/07/18