

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: MCGOWAN, IAN

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: IAN MCGOWAN

Date: 17/06/2017

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (*supply witness details on rear*)

This statement relates to a fire which was declared a major incident which I attended whilst on duty.

On WEDNESDAY 14th June 2017 I was on duty in full uniform in the company of PC ABDULKADIR 106BS. I was driving a marked police vehicle call sign BS81N. I was dealing with an incident on ADDISON ROAD and was aware at approximately 0100hours that there was mention of a fire (CAD 482). I was listening out to this and could hear from units on the scene describing the incident that it was on a larger scale than I first thought. When we had finished dealing with this incident I asked for the CAD and made my way to GRENFELL TOWER, LATIMER ROAD, W11.

On route I didn't know what to expect. I was one vehicle behind another patrol car which had BS1 in it, the duty officer for the borough. When I got closer to the scene I heard from BS1 that it had been declared as a major incident. Then was I rounded the corner on CLARENDON ROAD I could see the whole of the right side of the tower block was alight. The flames were so large on a block of that scale that it was lighting up the surrounding areas. I have never seen a fire like it and was shocked by what I could see. GRENFELL TOWER, is a large tower block consisting of 21 floors and sits towering over the LANCASTER WEST ESTATE and a 6th form college and a leisure centre. I would think it houses 100s of people within it.

When I got out of the vehicle I asked BS1 where he wanted us and at that point I was told to help move crowds back. There was a large number of people underneath the building in a small recreation area which is at the front of the leisure centre. These people were clearly in danger as there was lots of debris falling from the building. Some of the people had been evacuated from the building and others were

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filming or taking pictures on their mobile phones. Also when I looked at the building it looked as though it was leaning to the right hand side. I had a genuine held fear that the building would collapse and this would pose a considerable risk to the members of public underneath and cause multiple injuries and loss of life. With the help of a few other colleagues we worked to move the group of people which I would estimate was approximately 200 through a passage which runs between a 6th form college and also the leisure centre. We moved the cordon from the recreation areas through the car park for KENSINGTON LEISURE CENTRE and then onto the pavement of SILCHESTER ROAD.

This was a difficult task as I was having to move people who had been evacuated from the building and also family members who were desperately telling me that their families were in the building and trapped and they wanted to rush into the building to help rescue them. This is a natural reaction from family members however if I didn't stop the people from breaching the cordon then other injuries would occur. With the help of PC STOCKFORD and PC BLAKE-JOHNSON the cordon was moved to the mouth of the car park and I cordoned off the area with crime scene tape as a visual barrier to assist with keeping the crowd back. The crowd were mainly shocked with a few people who were attempting to trouble make which in the situation was unwarranted.

Within that cordon I recall an IC3 lady who was approximately 60 years old. She was sitting on a concrete bench. She was in the company of her grandchildren who were aged in their teens. When I asked her to move she was stating that her legs were not working and she looked shocked. She was dressed in her dressing gown and was one of the few people who had got out early enough to avoid smoke inhalation. I assisted her by taking her by the arm and leading her to another bench further down. When the cordon was moved further I also assisted her again to move her to a place where she could sit down as she was clearly in shock from the situation.

I attended the cordon on SILCHESTER ROAD speaking to members of the family of victims within. I can remember one young female was shouting and screaming at me and PC BLAKE-JOHNSON saying her aunt was trapped in the building and she was speaking to her on the phone. I found this difficult and all we could relay is that she needed to speak to the LFB via 999 to let them know where she is in order for them to plan a rescue attempt. This female was not happy with that and was quite clearly distressed by the situation as expected. However the message was relayed to pass that information on to the LFB to aid their plan of rescue. The female shouted at us to get in the building and save her now as she was dying. This was hard to hear and witness the desperation but she was advised accordingly.

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I was called away into the cordon by SUPT WARNOTT as he had shouted to me as a male had been found in the cordon at the bottom of the fire and was being obstructive when SUPT WARNOTT was asking him to leave. I assisted removing this male who was not happy and said that he had done more to help and save the people inside than we had done. I did place hands on this male but I was using force in order to protect him from injury and to remove him from imminent danger under common law.

I dealt with the cordon with PC BLAKE-JOHNSON but PC STOCKFORD went away in order to assist colleagues at another cordon on BRAMLEY ROAD as the crowd was gathering and becoming hostile. I was informed that the parking area we cordoned off was to be used as a LAS RVP for that side of the building. With this in mind I started to plan how to use the space to allow access and egress. Sometime later a series of police officers came and moved the cordon from SILCHESTER ROAD further up to the junction leaving a sterile area for myself to deal with the inner cordon. This took the pressure off myself and PC BLAKE-JOHNSON as the crowd had moved away.

It was approximately this time that ambulances were beginning to arrive and I did my best to manage the area and park the ambulances in areas where they could be turned around and not block the road. A few ambulances came through and were parked up and also the LFB trucks also arrived. Myself and PC BLAKE-JOHNSON still remained in the area as there was an opening across SILCHESTER ROAD where people were still coming through and trying to get to the scene. The ambulances had been left open with equipment inside so we were ensuring the safety of that area and the ambulances.

When on this cordon two other people, one a young boy of 16-17 and an older couple approached and said their family was lost. I advised them to go to the casualty reception centre that had been opened on CLARENDON ROAD. The boy looked as though he had escaped from the tower as he was wearing only pyjamas.

When on the cordon I noticed that there was a white male approximately 20-25 years old sitting on the wall and I could see that he had his head in his hands and was just crying. I approached this male and did the best I could to comfort him. He explained that his god-mother lives in the building and he was unable to get in touch with her. He said that she was living on the 15th floor. I explained that just because her phone wasn't being answered doesn't mean the worst or that she was trapped and if you woke up to a fire you would leave without any of your personal things. I then stood the male up and led him to the cordon also advising him that he should go to the reception centre on CLARENDON ROAD. The male was quite clearly very upset and distressed at the situation and understandably so. I had to give him that hope that his god mother was still alive as there was no way of knowing. I will never forget this interaction as it

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was devastating seeing him in that emotional state as he was on his own and upset. I led him to the cordon and directed him towards the CLARENDON ROAD reception centre and he said some of his family were there to meet him.

I policed the cordon from then on ensuring the ambulances that had been left open were safe and secured. I directed many members of the LFB to their command point and some LAS as with a scene that big lots of people were turning up from the services who had no idea where exactly they should be going. At one point I was made aware by a colleague who was at the bottom on the tower behind the cordon that a member of the press had got into the area. He had been found trying to film the scene and the LFB and was getting in their way. I assisted in removing him from within the cordon for his own safety. This male had come through a gate located behind the leisure centre. As this area was now compromised a colleague stayed on this point to secure it. I did place my hand on the back of this male to assist move him from the area. I did this in order to protect him from any injury and also to remove him from the area as he was getting in the way of the fire brigade who were trying to save lives. This male filmed me, asked for my name and accused me of assault. In this scenario I was justified using force under common law to remove him from danger and impeding any lifesaving from the LFB members.

Throughout the shift on the cordon I directed LFB and LAS to their differing RVPs as these were changing throughout the night as you can imagine on a scene that big. LFB at approximately 0400hours were short of gas cylinders, myself and PC BLAKE-JOHNSON assisted in wheeling these through the scene of the fire at the base of the tower block and into an area where they could be easily accessed for the crews who were going into the fire during the night.

Just on the right hand side of my cordon I was approached by a female from one of the houses. She offered us refreshments and said that she had invited anyone into her house who had missing family within the building. At various times during the night various males from the address were on their phones and letting of anger by shouting generally in frustration as they didn't know what was happening with their family. At one point one male tried to break through the cordon as frustration had built and he needed to be told firmly that he wasn't able to again protecting him from danger.

The scene of the fire was so large and to such a scale that I will never forget. I will always remember speaking to the desperate family members whose families were either inside the building or thought to be inside. I was shocked by the scale of the fire and how fast it spread throughout the building. The devastating loss of the situation was truly felt.

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