

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: MALIK, ABDUL

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 6 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: A MALIK

Date: 21/12/2017

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

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This statement concerns the day I attended Grenfell Tower as a firefighter on June 2017. It has been compiled from an audio recorded interview conducted at Richmond Fire Station, 323 Lower Richmond Rd, Richmond TW9 4PN, on November 2017 with DC BEACH AND DC ROBERTS. Also present at the interview was a Fire Brigade Union representative Martin CONWAY at my request. I have had the opportunity to read and make amendments prior to signing this statement.

I have been in the fire service for 15 years, I am a fully trained fire fighter working from Richmond Fire Station red watch. I have always been stationed at Richmond throughout my career, initially in the Blue watch for six years and then to Red watch, where I have been for the past nine years. I am fully trained and competent.

On 13th June 2017 I started my shift at 8pm. I am normally a firefighter at Richmond Fire Station but on that night I was standing by at FULHAM Fire Station, because they were short of two firefighters. I went alone. I hardly ever go to FULHAM so am not familiar with the station or the firefighters there. I started my shift and did the usual equipment checks and was allocated a BA set (Breathing apparatus) which I tested. I was posted with 4 other fire fighters on a pump ladder tender, call sign H351. I was informed for the shift I would be wearing the BA (Breathing Apparatus) along with Dave. Due to the time since the incident, over 5 months, I can't remember their names other than Dave HILL who I was paired with and someone called Chris. I have not worked with any of them before.

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At 1am we had a shout. I was wearing my fire boots and fire trousers and tunic and gloves along with a yellow firefighters helmet with visor at the front, it covers up to your neck and ears. The BA set has an oxygen bottle at the back and weighs about 10Kg, it has a visor that when you wear it you have very limited vision, it goes around just the eyes and the mask covers the mouth. I also had a radio, torch and access to the thermal imaging camera. We got into the fire engine. The watch manager, who is in charge of the watch, and the driver Dave in the front. I was sitting in the back of the tender with the crew manager, who basically is the deputy of the watch manager and one other firefighter. The shout was AFA (automatic fire alarms). We were called out to a block of flats I believe, I don't know what ground we were on. When we arrived it was all under control and we were not required to do anything and were sent back.

I didn't really hear, but the governor was talking about it. When the fire became 20 pump we were ordered to go there, I heard the order come over the radio for us to go to the GRENFELL TOWER, I was thinking it was just another fire, having never been there before. We had our helmets on and were ready as we travelled there, although we were not wearing our BA. As we approached the GRENFELL TOWER it was pitch dark, it felt like a long journey, I think Dave HILL had some idea of where it was, I have never been there before and do not know the area. I could see the silhouette of the building as it was dark, with just smoke rising from it, no flames. We arrived at about 1:20 - 01:30 am. It wasn't till we got to the GRENFELL TOWER that I could see any fire. There were 20 machines at the scene when we arrived, lots of engines moving and we found it difficult to park. We spent about 5 mins looking for somewhere to park. No one was familiar with the area, and there was no direct access to the Grenfell Tower. There were also lots of police vehicles and ambulances. We parked near a church in I think WHITECHURCH ROAD, which I have marked on a map, my exhibit AMM/3 seal MPSZ13185756, as "*FULHAM fire Eng*". We got out of our fire engine and I saw my Richmond crew arriving as well but did not see them again. The watch manager in charge of our crew was telling everyone their role. Normally my role would have been to meet with incident control or setting of the hydrant but because there were lots of firefighters there already, I was ordered by the watch manager to put on my BA and pair up with FF Dave HILL.

I carried the BA control board and a door enforcer. We walked through a huge crowd and entered the police cordon in GRENFELL ROAD. It was very busy and chaotic, with lots of people from the building they were panicking. Members of the public were coming up and asking questions. There were lots of

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firefighters going in and coming out. It was about a 50 metre walk from our engine to the entrance. I could see fire was coming from a window from the lower part of the building maybe 4<sup>th</sup> floor to maybe the 7th floor about three windows wide on the East Side. The flames were going up vertically. I have marked this on building Tower Elevations, my exhibit AMM/1 (Seal MPSZ13185759). I didn't think we wouldn't be able to deal with it. There was a platform ladder quite close to the tower sited on a grassy area at the base of the tower on the East side attacking the fire by spraying water on it. I have drawn its location on a map of the area, my exhibit AMM/3. It appeared to me that the fire was under control and I was not overly concerned. I could hear and see debris dropping from the building it was a really loud noise, banging like really heavy items hitting the ground. I could hear it more than see it really. I didn't see anyone in the windows of the tower at this time. There was no fire on the south side of the building where we entered at this time.

Dave and I went into the front entrance of the tower on the ground floor on the South side of the tower into a foyer which was a big open area, lots of firefighters everywhere. There was an open staircase up to the second floor. We were informed the bridgehead was on the second floor. The bridgehead is usually set two floors down from where the fire is. This is where you set up the BA entry control board and an officer tells you what to do. We went up the staircase to the bridgehead. The second floor was like a long lobby with a door at the end where the entry control point was.

Once we got there it was really chaotic lots of firefighters everywhere. We started queuing up, there were maybe 30 or so firefighters queuing up and we were near the back of the queue. An officer ordered us to go and get more equipment and bring it to the bridgehead. I put down the BA board at the bridgehead. I think there were three BA boards. A BA board is basically an entry control board, each board has an officer in control of it. We normally set the board just outside the entry point and every time a firefighter enters that point they hand their tally in from their BA set. The tally is 6" long, rectangular and yellow with your name and how much air is in your cylinder written on. It connects to control once you put it in the board. Each fire crew has a board but once you set the board anyone can put their tally in it, up to 12 firefighters. A firefighter is tasked to check the board is working at the beginning of the shift.

Dave and I went to get hoses and other equipment from fire engines outside. We made maybe four trips to fire appliances outside in the streets collecting hoses and dividing breech. The hoses were coiled up and weigh about 10 kg each, I had one under each arm. We did this about four times. We were in all our protective clothing and had air cylinders on but not under air. It took about half an hour and I got hot and

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tired. I have marked on the map AMM/3 the pump ladders that I collected the hoses from. The first one had two, another one had two and we collected breaking in equipment and branch hoses. There were people everywhere and firemen still coming in and out. There was an area at the bridgehead where the equipment was being dumped and we just left it there.

There was a female officer on the BA control I went in at, I don't know her name or her rank.

Dave and I gave in our tally and were ordered by the female entry control officer (ECO) to go to the 12<sup>th</sup> floor to carry out search and rescue of any one on that floor. We asked for a water charged hose and a branch to take with us but were told to just go and search and rescue, look for people and bring them down and get them out. We are trained to carry out a task whatever happens and never separate from your crew. Dave was in front of me. Normally when we go to fires the staircases are empty. On this night the staircase was chaotic very noisy and just really busy with people coming in and out. There were two Fulham firefighters just ahead of us. From what I can remember it was lit and there were no alarms sounding.

The stairway was normal like any block of flats, with a wall around it. There were firefighters bringing people down, men and women, some being carried down on the shoulders and some walking and you had to keep standing back. I did not see any fire inside the tower while I was in there, however the higher we went the smokier it got. I could see the numbering on the walls, but by the time I got to what I believe was the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, I'm not positive if it was the 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> or even 11<sup>th</sup> floor, it was so smoky that I had to wipe the front of my visor to see as the smoke was obscuring my vision through it. As we went up it got hotter and hotter from the fire. We were already hot and tired and sweating from carrying all the equipment to the bridgehead. The lobby where the bridgehead was located was not smoky however from the third floor upwards the smoke got worse. On a scale of 1 -10 I would say the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was not too smoky say a 3, however by the time we got to the 10<sup>th</sup> floor I couldn't see more than a foot in front of me so it was a 10. The stairwell got dark as we went up and people were pushing past me and asking to go past because they were bringing casualties down. By the time we got there we were exhausted. I believe the stairwell doors to each floor were shut as I went up.

As I got to the landing of what I believe was the 10<sup>th</sup> floor between one set of stairs and the next, I am not sure where the door was, but I was against the wall as some crew went past and I felt a tug on my tunic. At first I thought a firefighter wanted to get past, I then felt a tug again. I had to get right down to the floor to see who was tugging me, as the smoke was so thick. The smoke was down to the floor to about

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10" and I realised that there were two fire fighters sitting on the floor at my feet with a male casualty they were trying to bring down. They were sitting by his head. I have provided a sketch of where he was in relation to the stairs, exhibit AMM/4 (Seal MPSZ13185755). They were exhausted and breathing heavily, and they couldn't complete their sentences, I do not know who they were, they were asking for my help to carry the man down, they said they were too exhausted and that they couldn't carry him down without my help. The man was of large muscular build. His head was moving from side to side. I didn't think he was conscious and he wasn't making any noise, I was very concerned. I was also thinking I can't leave my partner. Part of my training is that when paired up with a colleague you do not leave them, I was in a dilemma as these firefighters were obviously exhausted and could not continue to carry the male down alone. I was trying to decide what to do in these extremely difficult circumstances, this was made worse as I was not with my usual team and I was very reluctant to leave Dave. I shouted to Dave, our hearing was limited by our helmets, masks and air. I hoped he could hear me, the sound is very muffled with the masks on. I shouted at Dave through my mask that I was going to help the two firefighters and he should stay with the two Fulham firefighters who were just in front of us, there was understanding. I continually shouted until I was down to the next floor that I'm going down to make sure he got the message.

I grabbed the males legs under my left arm and followed the other two firefighters down the stairs they were holding him under each arm, it was extremely difficult I was half stumbling to keep up as I was slower than them and was holding onto the stair rail with my right arm. Visibility was very poor to begin with by the time we got to maybe the 6<sup>th</sup> floor I could see the casualties face. It took a long time to get down due to the stairs, the weight of the male, the visibility, all my equipment and working under air. It took ages as we kept having to stop and take a breather. We eventually got down to the bridgehead where we handed the male over to the first aid crew and paramedics, I believe he was unconscious. I have no idea who they were and never spoke to them after. I have no idea what station or watch and can't describe them as everyone looked the same with the breathing apparatus on, so you try to hold on to another member of your crew. I did not see them collect their tally, there were more than 20 firefighters going in and out constantly I think they were gone by the time I collected my tally. Each board had a cluster of firefighters around it, going in and coming out. I went to the BA control board and collected my tally, normally I would have 25 minutes of air left and I knew I didn't have enough left because I had been working hard which causes you to use more air. The Entry control officer (ECO) asked where my partner was and I explained the situation to her. From the time I went in at entry control point (ECP) to coming back down was about half an hour. I was totally exhausted, tired and thirsty. I was really worried about

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Dave and the casualty. I was distressed from mental and physical exhaustion. I was sick with worry about Dave, unsure of whether he knew where I had gone in the chaos and also I was so very anxious and worried about his safety and whether he was alright in the tower or whether he had re-joined his crew. Until I saw him I couldn't relax. I was wondering if I had made the right decision or done something wrong, this was something that just would not normally happen. As a team we are supposed to go in together and come out together.

I went outside into the GRENFELL ROAD and removed my cylinder and left the empty cylinder with a pile of other cylinders, (marked on map AMM/3) and acquired a fresh cylinder from another fire engine. I then went back to the entrance to wait for Dave. It seemed like a couple of hours while I waited however after 10 to 15 minutes he came out, he was exhausted and worried about someone he had rescued. We talked about what happened, he said he had left his BA set outside the building. He said he had come down with a family, a husband wife and child. He was really concerned as he had handed the girl to her father, but when he came out he didn't see the girl in the father's hand. He didn't say where they came from.

I then queued up to go in again, initially in GRENFELL ROAD, as indicated as "initial wait" on map AMM/2 (seal MPSZ13185754), and then "moved back after spread of fire" also on the map exhibit AMM/2. I waited to be paired with someone else as Dave was not able to go back in due to not having his BA. I was waiting on the grass area near GRENFELL ROAD and could see the fire on the East side of the tower had now spread from just a few windows in the middle of the East side to the whole of the side all the way to the top from around the 4th or 5th floor it appeared to be going round to the other sides, although I could not see those sides. I could see police officers escorting firefighters in holding riot shield over their heads to protect them.

t think it had gone downwards. I could see the fire going around the building from the East to the North. From the time I arrived and went in and saw fire outside to coming out and seeing the fire spreading was about an hour. I saw a person on the east elevation appearing at the 7th to 8th floor marked on AMM/1 and the firefighter on the turntable ladder was trying to spray water around him. It was really far away and the person kept going away and coming back to the window. There were flames around the window as I was watching. After a while I didn't see him anymore. I waited here for 30 to 40 mins and was then told we would stand down. After 2 hours they told us to get ready and then they told us that it was only to be EDBA going in, fire fighters with extended duration breathing apparatus.

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We were there till 9 o'clock in the morning. We went to collect empty cylinders and tried to help whilst waiting. I did not use my radio to make or receive any communications. Our crew manager was given list of engines who were to be relived. We went back to our fire engine which was where we had left it earlier.

I suffered no injuries or smoke related ailments. Although I have had some counselling since. This is the most intense and biggest fire I have ever attended. I have attended other fires in flats but they have always been contained to one flat. The whole incident was difficult for me because I was not with my normal crew, it made it a lot worse, its good being with other firefighters but it's not the same.

I was last trained for high rise building fire about 2 months prior to the incident as we have training about three times a year. It's different from a house fire as you have to carry all your equipment up several floors. We train setting up a bridge head and bringing down a casualty.

6 years in the job. I would describe the rescued male as a large black guy, of athletic build over 6ft and very heavy. His head was going from side to side. He was wearing a t-shirt and sports bottoms and no shoes.

It was very difficult dealing with an incident like the GRENFELL TOWER when you are not with your crew because normally you know who everyone is and where everything is, where you stand and who does what. When you Standby sometimes you don't even remember names. It is happening more and more often. We quite often have to standby to cover other stations. This is because we are short of firefighters across the London Fire Brigade

When you work with your own crew, it's like working with your friends, family even, you gel together and work well together.

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