

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: SIMPSON, MARK

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 4 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: M SIMPSON

Date: 08/07/2017

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

This statement refers to the fire at Grenfell Tower W11.

On TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017 I was on a night duty, 1800-0200 hours on AID SERIAL 998C supervised by PS Simon BLONDELL which was assigned Counter Terrorism patrols in the SOHO area. At approx. 0100 hours on WEDNESDAY 14th JUNE 2017 my serial arrived back at Kensington Police Station as instructed by GT. Myself, PC Josh PRYCE, PC Simon BRUNDER and PC Trevor TANG changed our radio channels from AID to Kensington and Chelsea boroughs despatch channel and immediately received a message over the radio that all units should head towards GRENFELL TOWER. The call sounded very urgent. We managed to obtain a vehicle and PC PRYCE drove the four mentioned officers to the tower. We travelled north on LADBROKE GROVE W11. As we drove past CORNWALL CRESENT I looked to my left and could see GRENFELL TOWER on fire, PC PRYCE turned left onto LANCASTER ROAD W11 and headed towards the tower. We parked in the road to the EAST of the tower, as I got out the car I could see Grenfell tower was on fire on one side. We run past the tower, I think towards Hurstway Walk area to locate a supervisor for direction on where they want us to go. We heard on the radio to clear residents from, I think the BOMORE area. As I run towards this road I could see approx. 100 people in the road, blocking the road so emergency services could not get to the tower. We started ushering people backwards, away from the fire and into I believe was TREADGOLD ROAD. There was a lot of emotion as residents watched the tower shouting at us to do something. Another AID serial from another borough joined us and they started to take names of the residents of Grenfell Tower. Whilst this was happening a paramedic left a woman in a wheelchair near us. I left her

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for a few minutes thinking the paramedic will re attend. But he didn't. Myself and PC TANG started to talk to her and quickly established that she was a resident from the tower. She was upset and very worried about family which she believed was still in the tower. She was trying to call them on her mobile but could not get through to them. We need to move everyone away as a triage centre was being set up on the pavement opposite where we were. This was not ideal as the residents would see the injured and/or deceased being treated.

We had direction on the ground saying that buses will be collecting residents from CLARENDON ROAD and we needed to get everyone there. I got see the woman in the wheel chair was getting extremely upset so I decided to take her to the bus meeting point, I pushed her wheel chair away from the Tower onto BOMORE ROAD and through the alley to CLARENDON ROAD. PC TANG was trying to call the womens family whilst I was pushing her. Other residents followed us to CLARENDON ROAD.

I instructed everyone to stay in this road as buses will be collecting them soon. PC TANG managed to speak to the wheelchair bound womens family and gave them direction to CLARENDON ROAD. The women seemed slightly relieved. The buses were taking a very long time to get the residents. We had residents shouting at us as they did not know what was going on. I explained the buses will be here very soon. I called up on the personal radio for an ETA on the buses. MP replied that they were on the way a long time ago from Shepherds Bush area. I relied the information to the residents. Very soon after Ambulances turned up on CLARENDON ROAD, I quickly established that the alleyway will be used to stretcher the injured to the ambulances from the triage area. At this point PC TANG had another task to carry out. I was left on my own with approx. 80 residents. I was being shouted at as people believed we should be doing more. I was talking to people to try and calm them down in this heated situation. I was worried as I was on my own and the residents had unpredictable emotions and reactions towards me and the whole situation.

I could see residents were on the phones trying to contact their loved ones that were still in the burning tower. One male came up to me and said that his family are still in the tower, he started crying, I put my arm around him and cuddled him to try and reassure him. I mentioned firefighters were in the tower getting to people. While he was crying on my shoulder, which was emotional to me. I had another male come from behind me and shouted at me to get in the tower and get people. I realised I had one person crying on my shoulder while another resident was shouting at me and pretty much being rude. I had to try and deal with the both of them at the same time. I explained what I have heard is happening and at this point two women helped me and took the crying man from me.

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I could then see the injured being taken on stretchers towards my area. I tried to clear the area, but on my own was a bit of a task. I saw numerous victims from the tower being taken away by ambulance. One stood out in my mind as I had what I believed was a mother and I think 3 children sitting on one stretcher with oxygen masks on. I smiled at them to reassure them. I did feel relieved for them. I then had a Chinese male come to me and said he was concerned about his baby. My heart sank thinking the worse. I ran over and could see a baby in the arms of what I believed to be the mother. I asked what was wrong, he said that they had come out the tower and is concerned about the smoke being inhaled into the baby. I checked the baby for response and I could see movement and I thought the baby looked okay, I called to a paramedic and explained about the baby and maybe if they had a small oxygen mask. He said there are more injured people that were taking priority, in which I totally understood. I went back to the baby and said to the male what the paramedic said to me and I said that he knows his own baby, if there was "ANY CHANGE" in the baby at all to go to hospital immediately or call a paramedic over if still in the area. A Sergeant came up to me and said he needs more officers at WALMER ROAD asap as the crowds were getting irate and his serial needed help. I explained I was on my own with these people but we made a decision that the more important was now at WALMER ROAD. As I walked down the alley to WALMER ROAD I could see there were 2 road blocks on either side with people (locals and residents) being very verbal towards officers. I joined in and tried to help calm the situation down. I spoke the crowd and said please help us help the victims in the tower by everyone keeping calm and doing what police officers say to them. I was working this what seemed like minutes then I looked up at the tower and could see that the whole tower was now on fire. I could not believe what I was seeing, I have never seen anything like this in my life. Now the residents went quieter and just watched in disbelief. A while later I could see residents from CLARENDON ROAD were now in WALMER ROAD. The buses had not arrived. People were asking me where they should go. I did not have a clue, no one had said on the radio. I asked the crowd what places of safety are in the area, I was asking for community centres, hall etc. One young male said that there was a Rugby community centre on WALMER ROAD. I said to the male to find someone that has a key. I was making a decision to get the people off the streets and into one place as I could see the emotions were high, people needed water and clothing. I said to the male that we will get into the Rugby building centre one way or another, just get it open. The male came back to me and said they had found someone with a key. The RUGBY centre was now open so I got officers on that side of the cordon to direct people into that building and got locals to spread the word to everyone else.

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People that were in the area were starting to disburse, the plan was working, now people were off the street and into a place of safety, other local people were helping each other, I could now feel a sense of community were coming together at this terrible incident. I have to admit I forgot to tell MP on the radio that I had opened the RUGBY community centre on WALMER ROAD. I remember a message over the radio that said they were stopping emergency services going into the tower and are telling victims to self evacuate. My heart sank thinking that the tower could come down. I could see parts of the tower were falling to the ground. I could still see people inside the tower through their windows. I felt helpless at that point.

A while later I spoke to some residents that were on the phone to people inside the building, I think at this time the sun started to come up as it was getting lighter. I reassured people saying that firefighters were in the building trying to get to as many people as they can and tried to calm them down. I remember one female coming to me saying that she was on the phone to her daughter. I think she said her daughter was 8 years old, but I cannot be sure. She gave me the phone and I could hear the girl on the phone, she sounded scared. I said to her mother to tell her that firefighters were getting to as many as they can. The mobile went dead. I asked what floor was the girl on, I think she said floor 20. I looked up at the Tower and could see floor 20 was completely on fire. The female started crying a lot and was with people she knew and walked off being cuddled. I felt pretty helpless.

I could see local people started bringing water, food and clothes to the Rugby Centre on WALMER ROAD, at least they were being looked after. I walked with 2 females who broke through the cordon to go to the triage centre. I stopped them as I knew that the deceased were taking to the leisure centre and did not want them to get in the way with paramedics treating the injured. They said that they were on the phone to her sister that was next to the leisure centre being treated. I walked over and confirmed this was true and they were allowed to see her. Although the tower was still majorly on fire, I felt that things were calming down in the WALMER ROAD area. I met up with PC PRYCE who was heading towards our other serial on junction of ST MARKS ROAD and CORNWALL CRESENT, where I teamed up with PC TANG and took charge of this road block with him as this will be the entrance that the ambulances were taking to the tower.

It was getting lighter now and other residents were coming out of their houses asking what was going on, I couldn't believe they did not know, it did not occur to me they may have been asleep all night instead of working an 18 hour shift as I had. Things for me were starting to calm down and I was reflecting the incident in my head, I was tired, emotional and exhausted a night I will never forget.

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