

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HANAN WAHABI

I, Hanan Wahabi, previously of Flat 66, 9th Floor of Grenfell Tower, Grenfell Road, London, W11 1TG, WILL SAY as follows:

Background

1. My eldest brother, Abdulaziz El-Wahabi, moved into Flat 182 Grenfell Tower with his wife, Faouzia El-Wahabi, shortly after their first child, Yasin El-Wahabi, was born on 9 August 1996. Abdulaziz and his family had lived in Grenfell Tower for almost 20 years at the time of the fire, as council tenants.
2. Abdulaziz was born on 1 December 1964 in Morocco. He moved to the UK with our parents when he was 9 years old and married Faouzia, who is also Moroccan, in 1995. Abdulaziz and Faouzia went on to have 2 further children, a daughter, Nur Huda El-Wahabi, born 27 June 2001 and a son, Mehdi El-Wahabi, born 22 February 2009. Yasin (20 years old), Nur Huda (15 years old), Mehdi (8 years old), and their parents all lived in Flat 182 at the time of the fire.
3. I was born at St Mary's Hospital in London on [REDACTED] 1977 and have lived in West London my whole life. My parents are Moroccan, and I am one of 9 children. All of my siblings live in London, as does my mum. I grew up in W11, in the same flat my mum lives in today. My first language is English, but I also speak Moroccan Arabic. In 1999, I married my husband, Salah Eddine Chebiouni. Salah was born and raised in [REDACTED] but later lived in Morocco. In 1999 he moved from Morocco to London to start a life with me. [REDACTED]
We have a son, [REDACTED] (2000), and a daughter, [REDACTED] (2008).

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4. Salah, [REDACTED] and I moved into Grenfell Tower in October 2001. Faouzia had told me that there was an empty flat in the building, so I contacted the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and expressed my interest in it. Not long afterwards we were offered Flat 66, which was at the time on the 6th floor of the building. After the refurbishment and renumbering of the floors, Flat 66 came to be on the 9th floor. At the time of the fire, I lived at Grenfell Tower with Salah, [REDACTED] (16 years old) and [REDACTED] (8 years old). We had various pets over the years, but at the time of the fire, we only had a pet hamster, Cuddles, who lived in a cage. Like Abdulaziz and his family, we were council tenants.
5. I liked Grenfell Tower when we moved in. It seemed like a safe block and had a nice community feel. Neighbours would chat on the landings and the building was close to the Kensington Leisure Centre, where there's a gym. I felt lucky to live in the same building as my brother, and within walking distance of my mum's place. Some of my other siblings lived locally as well: my sisters Ghita Chellat, Malika El-Gourja and Amina Chaer-Yemlahi lived with their families in other blocks in [REDACTED], and my other sister Asia Ghamhi lived with her family 15 minutes away by foot.
6. I don't remember anyone giving us information on fire safety when we moved into Grenfell Tower, and I can't remember there being any signs when we moved in detailing what to do in the event of a fire. The only signs I remember seeing were put in near the lifts after the refurbishment. Those signs instructed us to stay in our flats if there was a fire elsewhere in the building. I never gave any thought to how we would be alerted if there was a fire elsewhere in the building, or whether there was a communal fire alarm system.
7. I always used the lifts to get to our flat. There were 2 lifts and I found them to be reliable. I never used the stairs, although Salah and Faouzia sometimes said that they did during the day because the lifts weren't working. I was at work during the days, and found that even if the lifts had broken down during the day, they were repaired by the time I returned home. I did notice that with one lift, the one on the left, the doors

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took ages to close. The lights on our landing pretty much always worked, we didn't have problems with people leaving rubbish on the landing on our floor and I never noticed much noise from other flats. I only noticed smells of cooking from other flats when our kitchen window was open.

8. There were problems with the water. Once, we had a flood in our flat and I contacted the council as my laminate flooring had to be changed, but they refused to pay for it. There will be a record of this in my housing file. Other times there wasn't any water in the taps. This happened more frequently after the refurbishment. Thames Water was called out many times to Grenfell Tower, but they wouldn't say why the water shortages kept happening. There were also problems with the electricity, though less regularly. Once, there was an electricity surge while I was on holiday and I had to buy a new refrigerator when I got back because ours had broken, and sometimes I heard from Faouzia that the electricity had been out during the day, when I was at work.
9. Abdulaziz's flat was originally a 2 bedroom flat but they created a third bedroom. You can see a floor plan of his flat at Appendix I. It was originally on the 18th floor of the building, but following the refurbishment and renumbering of the floors, it came to be on the 21st floor. The main bedroom was Abdulaziz's and Faouzia's. Yasin and Mehdi shared the other room and Nur Huda had her own bedroom which was made by putting up a partition in the lounge. To get to Nur Huda's room, you had to go through a sliding door in the kitchen. Abdulaziz contracted a builder to put up the partition in mid-2016.
10. Our flat was originally a 2 bedroom flat but we also created a third bedroom. You can see a floor plan of our flat at Appendix II. Salah created an extra bedroom out of the living room, which became [REDACTED]'s room. Salah is good with his hands, so he bought the supplies he needed from Homebase and put up a partition using plaster board. We kept the main door of the lounge as the door to [REDACTED]'s room and created another door in the lounge by breaking through the wall. We left the new doorway as an open entrance.

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11. Usually in our house, the kitchen door was left open. The doors to the bathroom and toilet were generally left slightly ajar. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] tended to keep their bedroom doors closed, and Salah and I tended to keep our bedroom door slightly ajar.
12. Abdulaziz was working as a hospital porter at the time of the fire. Faouzia didn't work outside of the home, but did a lot of voluntary work. She spoke some English, but she wasn't fluent. Neither Abdulaziz nor Faouzia had any mobility restrictions at the time of the fire. Mehdi had epilepsy, but apart from that, he, Nur Huda and Yasin were all in good health at the time of the fire. Yasin was studying accountancy part time at Greenwich University and working part time. He had a lot of friends. Nur Huda was in year 11 and had just finished some of her GCSEs. I picked up the results after she died. She had gotten high marks. I know her parents would have been very proud of her. Mehdi was in year 3 and attended school full-time.
13. I was working [REDACTED] at the time of the fire. I was in mostly good health in June 2017. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] at the time of the fire I wasn't in active pain and could walk normally. Salah had diabetes at the time of the fire. He had problems with his feet caused by diabetes so he could walk, but only slowly. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were in good health. They both attended school full time.

Refurbishment of Grenfell Tower

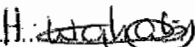
14. RBKC owns Grenfell Tower but the Kensington and Chelsea Tenancy Management Organization (KCTMO) ran and maintained it, and we paid our rent to the KCTMO. Major refurbishment works at Grenfell Tower started in about 2014, from what I can remember. KCTMO contracted Rydon to do the works.
15. Our front door was a heavy wooden fire door when we first moved in but it was replaced, I believe in around 2014. Only council tenants had their doors replaced; flat

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61 was leasehold and their front door wasn't changed, and on Abdulaziz's floor flat 185 was leasehold and their front door wasn't replaced either. Our old front door was a heavy wooden door with no window. It closed automatically. The new doors were wooden, covered in plastic, and were smaller and lighter than the old doors. When they replaced the doors we were given a choice between a plain door with no window and one with a small arched window towards the top of the door. Each of the new doors had a letterbox, a knocker and a peephole.

16. I chose the door without a window, and Abdulaziz chose the door with a window. There were three hinges on the door and from the third, there was a pole that connected the door to the wall, which was meant to make the door close automatically. Not long after they installed the door the automatic closing mechanism broke and the door refused to close at all. I complained to KCTMO and eventually someone came out to address this, but they removed the pole entirely rather than fixing it, so my door never closed automatically. I called KCTMO back to complain but my door was never fixed. My brother had the same problem. Even though the front door didn't automatically close, it was only ever left open if [REDACTED] was talking with his friends on the landing or when I was having tea on the landing with a neighbour. Otherwise, we kept it closed. In addition to not closing automatically, the bottom of my new front door had a draught. I can't remember if there was a draught seal, but if there was one, it didn't eliminate the draught.
17. Grenfell Tower had 20 floors of flats before the refurbishment. There were 6 flats on each floor and each flat was numbered 1 to 6, so the first floor had flat numbers 11 to 16, the second floor had flats 21 to 26, the third floor 31 to 36, and so on. Underneath the floors of flats were social services offices and Lancaster West Estate offices, and on the ground floor there was a concierge desk and the Grenfell crèche. During the refurbishment, they got rid of the concierge desk, and most of the offices and other establishments on the first 3 floors of the building were converted into flats. The floors were renumbered by adding three to the number of the floor, to reflect the additional floors of flats that had been added. That is why our flat went from being on floor 6 to

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being on floor 9.

18. We wanted the floor numbers to remain the same so that our flat numbers would still correspond to the floor numbers. For example, the new floors could have been numbered -3, -2 and -1. We argued that with the floor numbers changed, if there was a fire, the firefighters wouldn't be able to find our flats as the flat numbers would no longer correspond to the floor numbers. As I explain below, I was a spokesperson for the Grenfell Action Group, which raised this issue repeatedly with the KCTMO and various councilors, but they refused to change the flat numbers. They said it would confuse the Post Office or something, which didn't make much sense to me.
19. Our windows were also replaced. Before, we had single glazed windows which you opened by sliding across. The frames were sturdy, made of metal with wooden partitions underneath. The new double glazed windows were slightly smaller than the old ones and could be opened slightly on a latch or if you took the latch off, they opened inwards. They were made of flimsier material than the old window frames. I was home when they were installed: the builders put in foam insulation, covered it with foil, and the foil in turn was covered with plastic.
20. I could tell that the windows in my flat were not sealed properly as I could hear wind whistling through the frames even when the windows were closed. In addition, the key locks on the window in ■■■'s room broke pretty soon after it was put in. I complained to the KCTMO and Rydon about the draught after they installed the new windows, especially in ■■■'s and ■■■'s rooms. They came and put more filler in, but you could still hear the wind and feel the draught. We had other problems with the windows too. The second window in the living room, between the kitchen and ■■■'s bedroom, came off of the top hinge on 2 separate occasions making it impossible to close. Rydon came to fix it both times.
21. The new windows in Abdulaziz's flat were even worse. You could hear the wind howling and feel an even stronger draught when they were closed, I think because they were higher up.

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22. Rydon also installed new boilers, radiators and gas pipes in each flat. The initial plan was for the new boilers to be installed where the old ones had been, in the kitchens, behind the wall, so that they couldn't be seen, but Rydon then said that they couldn't do this because there wasn't enough space, and instead were going to install the new boilers by the front door and box them in. As I explain further below, we raised safety concerns and eventually our boiler was installed in our kitchen. Rydon put in new gas pipes which came from the landing through our front door, and then through the bathroom, toilet, cupboard and into the kitchen. They boxed the pipes in so you couldn't see them.
23. They also installed an extractor fan in the top section of the kitchen window which was supposed to suck out steam from the kitchen. It was operated by a button on the wall. As far as I can remember, the extractor fan in our flat was working at the time of the fire but I remember that others had issues with their extractor fans – I remember people complaining about it making a very loud noise even when it was off, particularly when it was windy. Abdulaziz had a lot of trouble with his extractor fan, which was very loud. The issue was worse in the higher flats. He had to get Rydon in to fix this.
24. Rydon put in a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm during the refurbishment. One was positioned as you enter the flat and one was in the kitchen. The London Fire Brigade came to our flat for a safety check after the refurbishment because I had seen a poster somewhere and called them. They checked the smoke alarm and said it was fine. I can't remember if the smoke alarm was battery operated. Given my concerns about fire safety in the building, I am sure I would have agreed if RBKC had offered to install sprinklers in our flat.

Grenfell Action Group

25. A group of residents started the Grenfell Action Group during the refurbishment because we had safety concerns and concerns about the quality of the renovations. There was already a Lancaster West Estate residents group but the problems around the refurbishment were specific to Grenfell Tower, so we formed a separate group.

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Abdulaziz, Faouzia and I all participated in the Grenfell Action Group and I was one of its spokespersons.

26. As I mentioned, residents didn't want the new boilers to be installed near the front doors as we believed it would make it more difficult to move things and people in and out of the flat in the event of a fire. We were also concerned about how draughty the windows were, and their poor quality.
27. We started a petition to complain about safety and quality issues relating to the refurbishment. As a committee, we went round and knocked on residents' doors to explain the issues and add names to the petition. We collated all the complaints related to the refurbishment and gave them to David Collins who provided them to Peter Madison of KCTMO via email. Peter Madison sometimes attended our meetings, and we met with MP Miss Borwick on occasion. They were all aware of the issues with the refurbishment. We also had a blog and newsletter that was posted to residents.
28. The issue of the boilers took a very long time to resolve. Rydon said they couldn't put the new boilers where the original ones had been as there wasn't enough space. Eventually, we won. Abdulaziz and I were among the few who waited it out and we had our boilers installed where the old ones had been.
29. Other issues cropped up with the refurbishment as well. Rydon would use both lifts which meant that residents didn't have access to them or had to wait too long for them. They would bring heavy equipment into the lifts and leave them dirty. We also complained about the noise of the renovations when they worked too early or too late. Eventually they agreed only to use one lift, and not to use it during school run time. They also covered the inside of the lift to protect it from dirt.

Previous fires

30. There had been a fire on my floor before the refurbishment but it had been contained

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on my floor. I think it was in 2012 although I'm not sure. It was lit deliberately. The recycling was to be collected the Friday but somebody picked it up, put it outside Flat 64 where our neighbour Paul used to live, and lit it. It happened during the day.

31. I was home with Salah and [REDACTED] at the time of that fire. [REDACTED] was about 3 years old. [REDACTED] was upstairs with Faouzia. The fire alarm on the landing went off, which is how we were alerted that there was a fire. I went to our front door when I heard the alarm go off. The door was hot. When I opened it, I could see flames roaring up and across the landing, as high as the ceiling. Salah said we had to leave the building, but I said we couldn't, because [REDACTED] was upstairs. Salah stayed behind on our floor to help the neighbours, and I grabbed [REDACTED] and ran to the 18th floor (which was Abdulaziz and Faouzia's floor number then), to Flat 182. We called the fire brigade and they told us we should stay in the flat. Faouzia and I stayed with the kids – Yasin, Nur Huda, Mehdi, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] – in Flat 182. I remember leaving the flat to check the 18th floor landing and seeing smoke coming up the vents. The smoke wasn't dark and the fire was contained on the 6th floor. Salah and the rest of our neighbours on the 6th floor escaped from the building, and eventually firefighters came and extinguished the blaze.
32. Afterwards, Salah, the kids and I went to hospital for smoke inhalation. My former neighbor Natalie Brewer, who lived in Flat 65 at the time, had to have her front door changed as it had melted. The walls on the landing were all black. Our flat door had been closed but the ceiling of our hallway was black from smoke, going from our front door into [REDACTED]'s room, and part of our front door was damaged. The Council must have been aware of the fire because they had to change Natalie's door and part of the flooring on the landing.

13 to 14 June 2017

33. I went to work as usual on Tuesday, 13 June 2017. It was Ramadan, so I was fasting. After I left school, I walked through Portobello Road Market and bought groceries to make dinner that night as we were having guests for *iffar*, the evening meal where we

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break our fast.

34. On my way home, I bumped into Abdulaziz, Faouzia, Yasin and Mehdi on the path between Grenfell Tower and the Kensington Leisure Centre. I gave my brother a kiss on the cheek. Usually Mehdi didn't like kisses but on that day, he gave me a kiss on the cheek. I told Faouzia she looked really good - Faouzia and I used to go to gym together and she had lost weight. Abdulaziz said they were on their way to drive to the supermarket to buy water and kill time until the sun set and they could have their *iftar* food. I told him that I was going to go home to cook and he shook his head and gave me a teasing look as if to say he was sorry for me with so much on my plate, as I was there cooking, looking after the kids and I had a full-time job. In our culture, this isn't the norm for women. By the time I got upstairs to our flat, Faouzia was ringing me on my mobile phone, saying Abdulaziz had said that I shouldn't cook, and should go to their place for dinner that night instead. I said I would have loved to do that but I had guests coming so I couldn't. If I hadn't had guests coming, I would have been with them in their flat that night.
35. At about 7 p.m. I got home and started cooking. [REDACTED], my husband's friend's daughter, and her two friends [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (I'm not sure of their last names) came to our home for dinner at around 9 p.m. Salah, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I broke out fast with our guests. After eating with us, [REDACTED] left for Al-Manar, a mosque on Akalam Road in W10. He, Yasin and a few of their friends went to that mosque every day to do the special prayers that are performed during Ramadan and afterwards they would always go for something to eat or a milkshake or whatever. Salah, [REDACTED] and I stayed at home with our guests. I sent [REDACTED] to bed when it was her bedtime and [REDACTED] and her friends left not long before midnight. I didn't notice anything unusual in our flat that night.
36. As usual, I had to call [REDACTED] to tell him to come home. I never go to sleep until he gets in as I am a bit of a worrier. When I called him he said he, Yasin and some friends had gone to Tinseltown in Westbourne Grove. I told him it was time to come home now and he said, "I'm coming, I'm coming". He had school the next day, and his AS Levels

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coming up, so I was intent on him coming back at a reasonable hour. In the meantime, I tidied up everything, washed all the dishes, and covered the food. The CCTV image of ■ entering the building that night shows him wearing his helmet. The time on the image is 12:38 a.m. He has a moped so he probably would have come home on it which is why he was wearing a helmet.

37. When he got in, he went to his bedroom and started playing on his Playstation. Normally ■ and Yasin would come home together and Yasin would come to our place for a bit but that evening ■ came home alone, without Yasin.
38. Once ■ was home, Salah and I went to bed. After I had fallen asleep, Salah got up to go to the toilet and I heard him call my name. I remember waking up and smelling smoke and plastic. It was a very strong, immediate smell. I started to panic right away. I picked up my phone which was right next to me, and ran into the hallway. I didn't check the time. ■ was coming out of his bedroom at that point. Salah, ■ and I were all in the hallway near the bathroom.
39. I said, "*oh my God, what is it?*" I could see smoke coming from the living room area. When I first noticed the smoke, it was white and there was smoke throughout the room, not just near the ceiling. The smoke alarms didn't go off; sometimes when I've burnt toast they go off but they hadn't gone off by this point.
40. I was all flustered and panicky. I walked towards the lounge, through the open doorway. I could feel heat in the living room, see and smell smoke, and there were small particles of ash blowing in from the living room window, which we had left slightly ajar. The smoke wasn't the black smoke that Abdulaziz described later that night and it wasn't as dense as the smoke we would later encounter in the stairwell as we left the building. We were able to see through it easily – I could see across the room, for example. I was in a panic and a daze, and I can't remember if it was ■ or I that went to the living room window. I thought I did, but ■ said it was him. One of us went to close the living room window, and at that moment, flames shot up on the outside of the building, in front of our living room window. The flames were orange-

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red. We managed to slam the window shut before the fire entered the flat. By this point I was having a panic attack. It was difficult for me to breathe, but I'm not sure if that was because of the smoke or because I was hyperventilating.

41. ■■■ said we had to get out of the building. Salah was adamant that the procedure was that we were to stay put. ■■■ said, *"well, you can stay put but I'm getting out"*. He left the flat to see whether the landing on our floor was okay. Then he ran back into the flat, into ■■■'s bedroom, and grabbed ■■■ from her bed. He emerged from her room carrying ■■■ and said, *"I'm going"*. He left wearing a long black male kaftan. ■■■ was wearing a white pajama top, navy blue pajama bottoms, and no shoes. ■■■'s mission that night was to make sure his sister was safe. He didn't show any fear. He was really the adult in that situation and my husband and I were the children. I said to ■■■, *"you go, we're coming"*, and he left carrying ■■■, who looked shocked as she had been sleeping. ■■■ has told me that as he left the building he was told by members of the fire brigade to go back upstairs. ■■■ said he didn't listen to them and that he had seen other people making their way down. The CCTV image shows ■■■ leaving the building carrying ■■■. The time on the image is 1:19 a.m.

42. I noticed a mobile phone near the window in the lounge, an old Samsung which I don't think had a SIM in it, which ■■■ used to watch Netflix and thought, *"if it catches fire it will make things worse"*, so I took it off the charger. I remember that I had the two mobile phones in my hands as we were in the living room. At that point, even though I was scared, I still thought we would be okay, and that the flat would be fine as well, so I stayed behind to close the windows in the kitchen, which had been open as it was a hot day. I could still see ash in the kitchen blowing in from the window and settling on the floor, and the smoke was getting thicker. It was still mostly white, but getting a bit grayish. I ran back into the bedroom and put a brown robe and brown headscarf on, as I was only wearing a vest and white striped pajama bottoms. I pushed my feet into a pair of Crocs. Salah put his work clothes on, a navy blue t-shirt ■■■ and denim jeans. Then we left the flat. I only took the 2 mobile phones with me. Salah picked up his house keys from the keyholder by the front door and slammed the

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door behind him. He took his house keys with him, but nothing else. ■■ hadn't even taken his phone, even though he is usually glued to it. Just as we left the flat, our smoke alarm went off. We didn't hear any sirens or see any flashing lights from the emergency services until after we left the building. We didn't call 999 before we left and we didn't try to cover our faces with wet towels or anything like that. We just got out.

43. Salah was behind me as his diabetes affects his feet and makes him walk slower. From what I can remember, there was a bit of smoke on the 9th floor landing, but not as much as in our flat. We rushed past the lifts to the stairwell, Salah behind me. It didn't occur to me to take the lift. You learn from childhood that you mustn't take the lift when there is a fire.
44. There is a heavy fire door leading to the stairs and it was closed, so we opened it and then went down. As far as I can remember, it closed behind us. The smoke was worse in the stairwell than on the landing. The stairwell is narrow so we went single file, and I went in front of Salah. I didn't look back as I knew he would be slower than I was and I was in flight or fight mode. I was focused on getting out.
45. I could feel heat in the stairwell. The lights were on so I could see where I was going. I could see smoke, but it wasn't thick and black. The smoke got thicker as I descended but I could see through it, and could always see the steps in front of me. The steps weren't slippery. I was inhaling more smoke in the stairwell than I had in my flat though and it was difficult to breathe. My throat burned. I was gasping and breathing heavily as I ran down the stairs.
46. On the fourth floor I saw 2 firefighters on the stairs: one was holding open the heavy fire door leading to the fourth floor landing, and the other was on one knee, holding a hose which he was using to fight flames I could see on the other side of the fire door. I can't remember how high the flames were or what they looked like as I was focused on how to get around the firefighters, so that I could go and find my children. I froze, thinking that they were going to tell me to go back to the flat and "stay put". I couldn't

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get past them at first because the firefighter who was kneeling was in the way. Then, he adjusted himself slightly, which gave me just enough space to jump over his foot onto the little landing between each flight of stairs. The firefighters were so busy I don't think they even noticed me and if they did, I wouldn't know because I didn't look behind me. I kept running down all the way down, to where the new part of the building is.

47. When I got to floor 1, I didn't know which way to go to get out of the building. By this time my throat was extremely dry and burning from the smoke. I kept thinking, "*which way do I go?*" I hadn't left the building by the stairs since the refurbishment and there were 2 options in front of me but no signs or lights telling me which way was out. I knew that one set of stairs led to the new communal space and the other led out of the building but didn't know which to choose so I just guessed. Thank God I guessed correctly. The smoke wasn't as thick on the floors where the new flats were. The time on the CCTV image that I have been shown of me leaving the building is 1:21 a.m.
48. As I ran out of the building towards the path where I had run into my brother earlier that day, my phone rang. It was my former neighbor, Natalie Brewer. She had moved a few weeks before the fire. Her son, Shane, was living in a hostel in the area and happened to be in the park downstairs when he saw the fire and had called Natalie, telling her to call me. When I picked up, she said, "*there's a fire, there's a fire!*" I said that I knew. She could hear I was fighting to breathe. She said, "*are the kids okay? And Salah?*" At that point I realized Salah wasn't behind me. I kept saying, "*I don't know where he is, I don't know where Salah is. He's not here, I can't see him. I can't see him*". Natalie said, "*calm down Hanan, find him*".
49. I looked ahead and could see ■■■ and ■■■ by the leisure centre and I told myself, "*thank God, they are safe*". I ran towards them and said, "*I don't know where your dad is*". I was still on the phone with Natalie. Then I saw Salah, walking out of the tower slowly. The time on the CCTV image I have been shown of Salah leaving the building is 1:22 a.m. He came over to us and we all stood together at the leisure centre, facing the tower. Flat 66 was on the right corner of the building in front of us, and Abdulaziz's

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flat was on the left corner in front of us.

50. As soon as I looked back at the tower, I realized how bad the fire was. In the time that it had taken me to go downstairs, the fire had flown up to the 17th floor of the building, on my side of the building, that is, the side where my family's flat was, and all the other flats ending in "6". I was completely panicking. [REDACTED] grabbed my phone and took a photograph of the building. That photograph was taken at 1:25 a.m. He also took a video recording of the fire. On it, you can hear me saying, *"give me the phone, I need to call Abdulaziz."* I grabbed the phone and [REDACTED] tried to grab it back as he was trying to send Abdulaziz a photograph of the building so he could see how bad the fire was. He didn't manage to send the photograph as I grabbed the phone from him to call Abdulaziz.
51. Abdulaziz answered my call and I said to him, *"there's a fire"*. I could still feel the effects of the smoke in my lungs and chest, and I kept coughing, but I was full of adrenaline and it didn't occur to me to seek medical attention. Abdulaziz said he was aware of something going on, and he kept saying, *"shall I come down? What do you think?"* I said, *"I think you should get out"*, and told him, *"it's on my side now not on your side"*. He said, *"alright sis I'm coming"*. I called him back a few minutes later, at about 1:30 a.m., and he said, *"I tried but I couldn't because there was too much black smoke and we can't see, we can't breathe"*. The description of the smoke was completely different from the smoke I had seen. He said, *"it's going to be alright sis isn't it? It's going to be alright"*. He kept telling me to say it was going to be alright so that Mehdi wouldn't panic. He was especially worried about Mehdi, because Mehdi had epileptic fits when he was anxious, including recently. Faouzia had told me about it at the gym. I said, *"it'll be fine, it'll be fine"*. I now feel guilty about this, that I kept saying it was going to be okay even though I knew it wasn't. I said, *"don't worry, it's going to be okay. Do you know what, as soon as it starts approaching your window I am going to call you again"*.
52. I kept watching as the flames spread up the outside of the building until it was literally at the top of the building. All this time, I could hear people screaming out of the

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windows. It was like watching a horror movie. Chunks of burning material and debris were falling from the building. I called my brother's phone back for the third time. Faouzia picked up. I said to her, *"the fire is at top of the building now. You need to get out"*. I could hear Abdulaziz talking in the background to the emergency services. Faouzia said the emergency services had said they were coming to rescue them. She sounded calm; I knew she was holding it together for her kids. She's not someone who panics like me. I said, *"as soon as I see the fire approaching your window, I will call you back"*. The conversation ended with me thinking they were being rescued, as Faouzia said the emergency services were coming, and that they had been told to stay put. At this point, [REDACTED] took a photograph of Faouzia at the window of their flat. We hung up.

53. From what I could see, the fire spread in an "L" shape. First it went up to the top of the building on my side of the building, as I've described. Then suddenly, it started to move across, past the corner of the tower with all the flats ending in "1", and in the direction of the corner of the building where my brother's flat was. From there it went down the building again, on the side where my brother's flat is.
54. [REDACTED] took a video on my telephone at 1:32 a.m. which has been provided to the police. In the video, you can see the kitchen light in Abdulaziz's flat go off. As we were moved back by the police, I lost sight of the flat for a short while and when we came around and saw Flat 182 again, it was on fire.
55. I called Abdulaziz's phone for the final time and again, Faouzia picked up. I told her, *"GET OUT"*. She said, *"we are trying, we are trying"*. By that point, my sister Amina was with us. She said, *"let me speak to her"*. I heard Amina repeating what Faouzia was saying to her, *"the fire is in the kitchen now"*, *"we have been told to go to the bedroom and put down wet towels"*. They hung up before I got to speak with Faouzia again. That final call was at 2:15 a.m.
56. I called Abdulaziz's mobile number 4 times that night, each time from my own phone. The first 2 times he picked up and I spoke with him, and the final 2 times, Faouzia

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picked up and I spoke with her. Over that period, [REDACTED] spoke to Yasin, Nur Huda, Abdulaziz and Faouzia. He used my phone, a friend's phone, and his dad's phone.

57. Looking at the smoke from outside of the building as it climbed up the building, it was completely different from what I had seen when I was inside the building. It was now a very dark colour, like Abdulaziz had described, instead of white or light grey.
58. I have a large family, and many of them were with me at Grenfell Tower that night. My nephew [REDACTED] arrived first, I would say within 20 minutes of us escaping the building. He was on his way home, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Shortly after, my sisters Amina and Yousra came, and then Rajaa, my niece, who is the daughter of my sister Ghita Chellat. Rajaa arrived along with her father Ahmed and son Sulayman. My sister Asia came after that. My brothers Amin and Hamed and my sister Malika, with her sons [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], were also there that night. My other sister Fatima was the last to arrive with her husband Hamza, who is also known as Christopher, and their son [REDACTED]. They live in southeast London.
59. Throughout the period when we were in telephone contact with Abdulaziz and his family, the police kept moving us away from the tower as big chunks had started to come off of the building. They started moving us back from about 20 minutes after we escaped the building. First they moved us towards the other side of the leisure centre, still facing the same side of the tower, but further away. About 10 minutes later, they moved us further back, towards Walmer Road.
60. [REDACTED] had been wandering around and made his way back to the car park under the tower. He says he saw members of the fire brigade there, eating sandwiches. He feels very angry with the fire brigade still, because he says they were having a sandwich while his family was dying, and the fire was still burning.
61. From what I could see, firefighters were using hoses to fight the fire, but the water was being aimed at my floor and couldn't get any higher. They weren't even able to reach my flat, as far as I could see. I didn't speak with any firefighters. There was a

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helicopter, which we thought was operated by the emergency services, and would try to rescue people, but it didn't.

62. We were still out on the street when it got light. ■■■ was barefoot, shaking like a leaf with shock. ■■■ took off his kaftan and wrapped it around her and Salah eventually took her to my sister Amina's house. ■■■ had a contact at the Portobello Rugby Club on Walmer Road and got them to open the club early. Some of my family went there but I didn't, because I didn't want to miss my brother, in case he escaped.
63. I spoke to the police for the first time before it was light outside, while I was still standing outside of the tower. I told them my flat number and my brother's flat number and that he hadn't come down. They didn't say anything, just thanked me and moved on. There were loads of people and I think they were trying to create a list of people trapped in the building.

Aftermath of the fire

64. Later, when it was light, I went to the Rugby Club. A woman I didn't know came out and suggested we make a list of who was in the tower and hadn't yet been found. I gave her Abdulaziz's name, and she wrote it down. There must have been a mix-up because Abdulaziz's name somehow got onto the community safe list of people who had been found, so there were rumours circulating that they were safe. There were so many different rumours that night. One person said she had seen Mehdi near Latimer Road Underground Station wearing a gas mask. Someone else said he'd seen my brother coming out of the building and that he appeared dizzy and disoriented. Another person said they had seen Yasin in hospital.
65. We didn't get any official updates about Abdulaziz and his family until we were assigned our Family Liaison Officers (FLOs), Jennifer Anderson and Andrew Brown. We met with them at Amina's house. At first they asked us for Abdulaziz and his family's dental records just in case, but said they didn't know whether they had survived or not. Within a week of the fire they told us it was unlikely they had survived, as they hadn't been found. We didn't get final confirmation until weeks later that

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Abdulaziz, Faouzia, Yasin, Nur Huda and Mehdi had all died in the fire. The police told us that the foam released cyanide and they would've gone to sleep within 90 seconds, and never woken up. I have listened to Nur Huda's final 999 call. You can hear that they weren't able to speak by that point, even though she managed to make the call. You can hear them struggling to breathe, and then the line goes dead.

66. I was at the Rugby Club and in the streets in the local area all day on 14 June 2017. People from RBKC came to the Rugby Club. They took my details and eventually gave me, Salah and the kids a room at [REDACTED], where I am still living now. A friend drove me there. I don't remember RBKC offering me transport. I was fasting that day but I couldn't eat anyway, because of the trauma. I don't remember meals having been arranged by RBKC though.
67. I was not assigned a keyworker or anyone I could call from RBKC initially. No one from the Council came to see if we were okay in the days following the fire. They just left us. A lady from RBKC eventually came, I don't know how many days after the fire. She brought another lady with her, named Sarah Cheetham. I wrote down Sarah's full name and contact number. They told me Sarah was my link person. I contacted her, but she stopped responding and I was told she'd been transferred somewhere else. It was all very confused.
68. I met Ashley Drake, my current keyworker, by luck, when I went to Portobello Rugby Club shortly after the fire. My sister had told me they were helping people to get passports as we had lost all of our documents in the fire. No one official told me I could go to the Rugby Club for ID; this information came to me through my sister. When I was at the Portobello Rugby Club, I met Ashley, who is a social worker. I told her how confusing everything was and she comforted us that day. It turned out that the people at the Portobello Rugby Club weren't able to get a replacement passport for me for various reasons so in the end a friend helped me get it sorted. Several weeks later, I ran into Ashley at a Grenfell meeting in Holborn, and soon after that she became my keyworker. Ashley told me that by that point 4 different keyworkers from

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different councils were assigned to me according to RBKC's IT system, but no one had told me about any of them and none of them had contacted me.

Previous statements and interviews

69. I've made 2 written statements to the Metropolitan Police dated 18 June 2017 and 2 August 2017. The process was very difficult emotionally, but the FLOs who took my statement were understanding. On 7 July 2017 I identified jewellery belonging to Abdulaziz and his family that had been retrieved from his flat, and on 1 February 2018 I confirmed identifications for some CCTV images from the early hours of 14th June 2017 taken from Grenfell Tower. I have also done one interview with Jon Snow on Channel 4, and one with *The Times* newspaper.

Impact

70. It's difficult for me to describe in words the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire on me and my family. I don't think we'll ever be the same. It's broken us. I don't feel safe anymore, and our family feels unstable. Salah and I split up after the fire. I'm still living in a hotel. I feel very exposed. [REDACTED] still cries a lot. She has these outbursts of weeping and it takes me a long time to calm her down. Maybe the hardest part is that I feel like I'm failing my children. The people who caused this fire stripped us of the sense that we can protect our kids.

71. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I don't feel that the support we have received from the council has been provided with teenagers in mind. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I'm still traumatized myself, and struggling to deal with the basics, like sorting out our housing situation. I feel overwhelmed all the time.

72. I feel like we are treated like a number. RBKC just wants to be able to say "we've

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rehoused this many people", rather than really looking at each family, at my family, and thinking through what we need. For example, they provide a lot of services through the Curve, but the Curve is very close to Grenfell Tower, and I don't feel able to go. Also, there is no privacy there. I don't have the time or energy to attend tons of different meetings – I have 2 children to raise, am separated from my husband, and am a part time carer for my ageing mother. I need the services to come to me.

73. You always hear that there is a difference in terms of the way people are treated depending on their social class, and their ethnicity. I never really used to believe that. I was born and raised in London; I'm a Londoner. Since the fire though, I have come to feel that people are treated differently, treated as less important, depending on their social class and ethnicity. We brought our children up to believe everyone is equal, but maybe a fire like this wouldn't have been allowed to happen if a different type of person had been living in the building.
74. There is no way to bring my brother, sister-in-law, and their children back. Their loss is something that I will have to live with for the rest of my life. But I hope that this Inquiry will provide answers to me and my family as to why flammable materials were allowed to be used in constructing/refurbishing the tower, why construction of the Kensington Aldridge Academy was permitted when it was known that it would hamper the ability of emergency vehicles to access the tower, and why my brother was told by the emergency services to stay put in his flat, but was never rescued. We later found out that Abdulaziz's neighbor, Marcio Gomes, and his pregnant wife and daughter escaped the building alive only because they ignored the fire services' advice and left the building when they were told to stay put. I want to know why my brother wasn't given advice by the emergency services that could have saved his life.

I believe that the content of this witness statement is true.

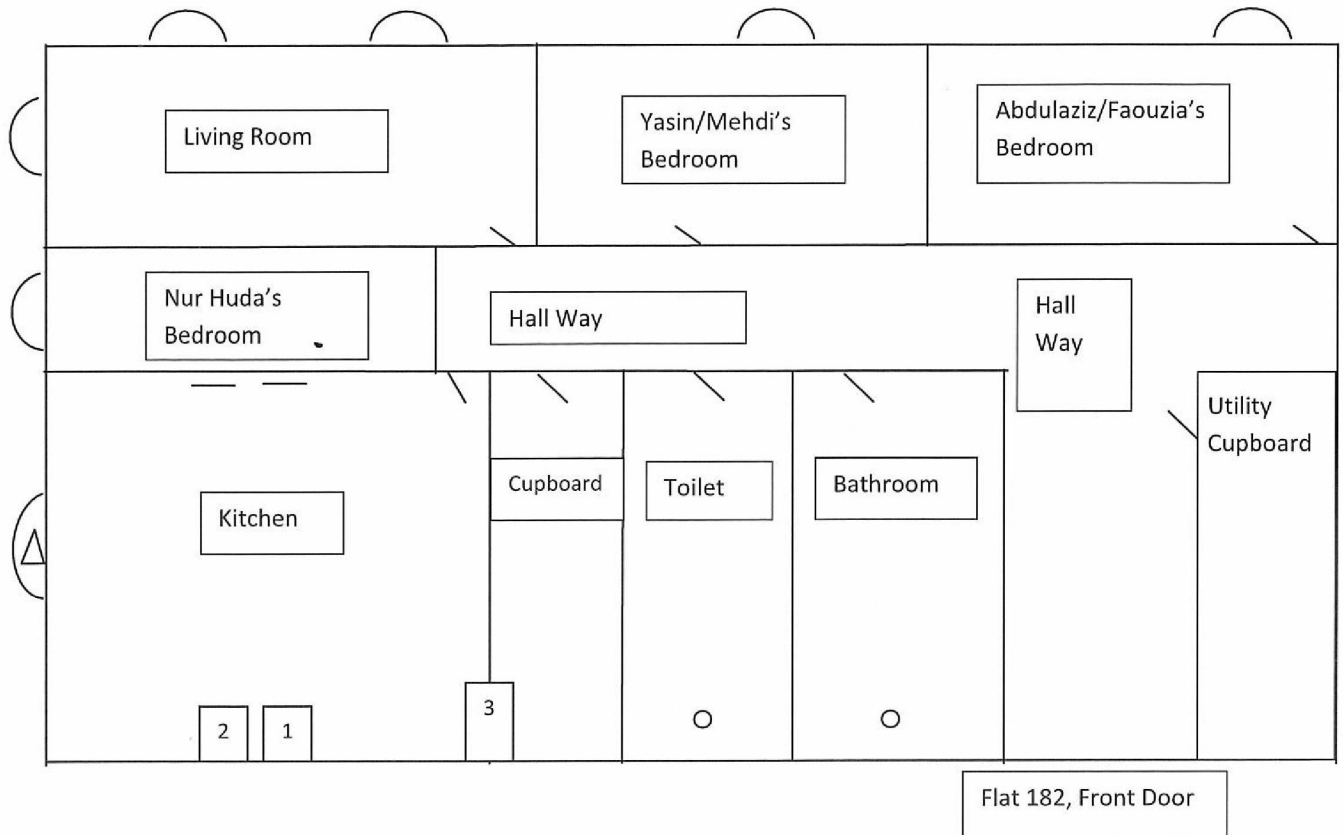
Signed: H. Wahabi Dated: 18-4-18

Hanan Wahabi

Name: Hanan Wahabi. H. Wahabi Date: 18-4-18

APPENDIX I

FLOOR PLAN, ABDULAZIZ EL-WAHABI, FLAT 182, 21ST FLOOR



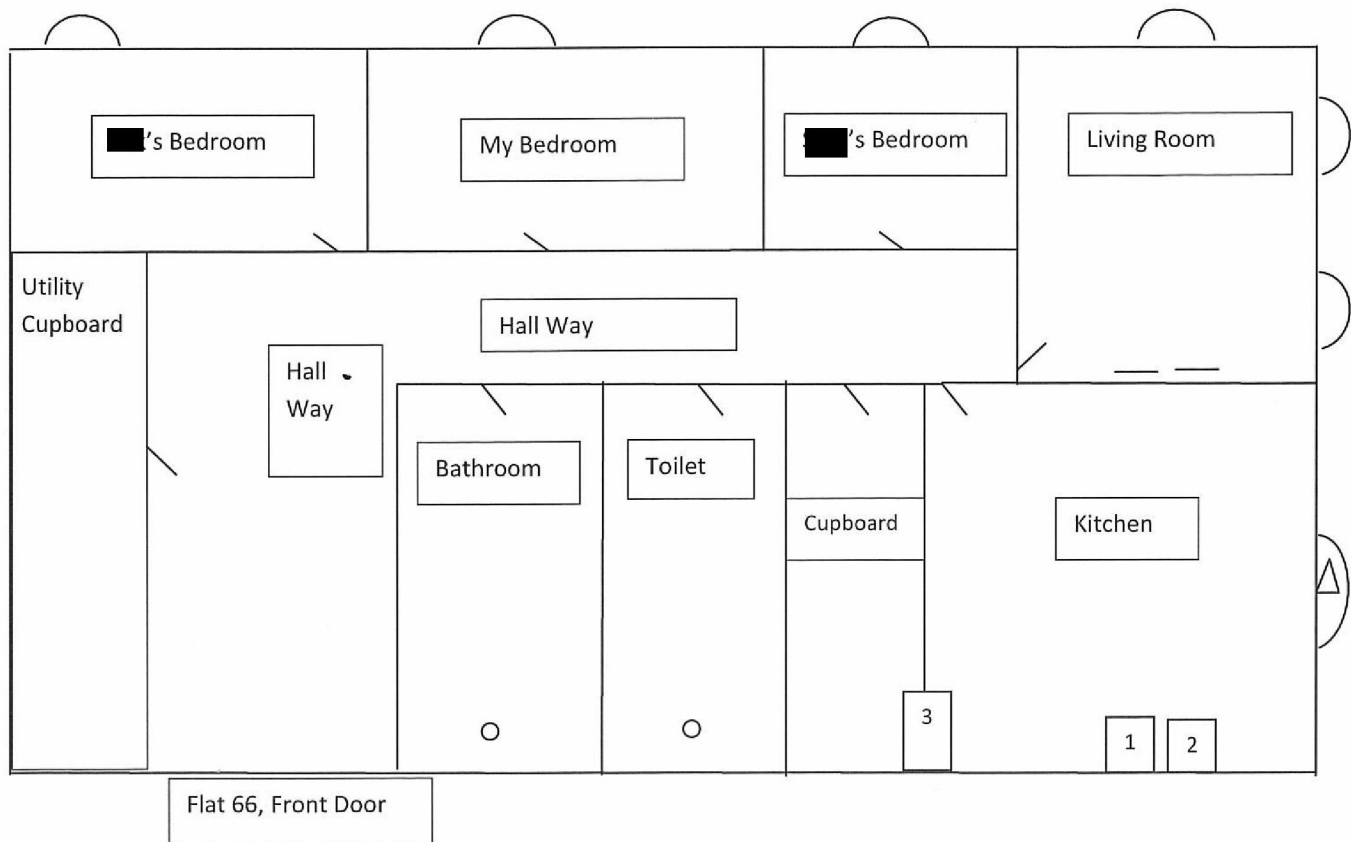
- (semi-circle) = Window
 (O) = Vent
 (diagonal line) = Standard door
 (double line) = Sliding doors
 (triangle) = Extractor fan (by the window)
 (1) = Washing machine
 (2) = Gas cooker
 (3) = Boiler

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APPENDIX II

FLOOR PLAN, HANAN WAHABI, FLAT 66, 9TH FLOOR



⌒ = Window

○ = Vent

↘ = Standard door

—— = Double doors

△ = Extractor fan (by the window)

1 = Washing machine

2 = Electric cooker

3 = Boiler

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