
STATEMENT OF MOHAMMED ABDUL HAKIM

Preamble

1. I make this statement from my own personal knowledge and from matters that I have been told about by others; where the information does not come from my own personal knowledge I make this clear below.
2. I make this statement because my family lived at 142 Grenfell Tower, on the seventeenth floor. My mother Rabiya Begum, my father Kamru Miah, my sister Husna Begum and my two brothers Mohammed Hamid and Mohammed Hanif all passed away in the fire. I am a core participant of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Personal background

3. I was born on [REDACTED]. I am working as a [REDACTED]. I was living in my own shared accommodation [REDACTED] at the time. My wife, Farhana, was living with my parents. There wasn't enough space for me to live there too. I stayed with my parents here and there. I would take them to hospital and do their shopping. My father had two strokes: one in January and one in July 2015 and he was extremely weak – he needed support and help. I would stay with him for a week at a time, here and there. My parents didn't speak English very well so I had to translate for them. I was the eldest of my siblings, and my siblings all worked full time whereas I worked part-time so I had the time to help out my parents, whereas they didn't as much – although they did more than their fair share at times, and as and when they took time off work in order to help support both of my parents.

Mohammed Abdul Hakim

Signed: *H. Mohammed*

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4. My family moved into Grenfell Tower in August 2016. They had been living there for almost 10 months before the fire. Before that we moved so much, it was hard to keep track. We had been moving since 2010. We used to live in a housing association flat in Chelsea, from 1989 - 2010. That was our family home. It was a 2 bedroom flat. There were 6 of us living there, and by the time we were all adults we needed more space. We had been bidding for years for a larger property but had no luck as properties were in short supply for a family of 6. We left the housing association and registered with RBKC. The process started under the 'private renting scheme' where the council rents from a private landlord. The Council tried to get people over 18 to move out separately, so they told me that I was old enough to move out. I moved to the area when my parents moved to Edmonton, and by the time they moved to Grenfell Tower I had managed to get my own place in shared accommodation [REDACTED].
5. I married Farhana Hussain on [REDACTED] February 2017. She was working as a [REDACTED]. She knew my parents for a couple of months, they had grown fond of each other. As they were getting to know each other, little did they know that a fire would break out at Grenfell Tower a few months down the line, and their relationship would sadly come to an end unexpectedly.
6. 142 Grenfell Tower is a 3 bedroom flat on 17th floor. The Council letter to my family said that it was on 14th floor and I was told this by my mother before she passed away. She also told me on the day they went to pick up the keys for the flat in Grenfell Tower they were then told that it wasn't for the 14th floor, and that they had been placed on the 17th floor which was a complete and utter shock for them, despite previously telling the Council before moving that my father had serious health issues due to his strokes. They told the Council that they didn't want to move there, but the Council said that if they didn't move there was nothing else available and if they refused the property they would be making themselves "intentionally homeless". For a stroke patient I thought it was not acceptable to put him on such a high floor. My father had really bad arthritis in his legs so he had to walk with a stick and could only walk for short steps at a time. He would get very out of breath, even walking short distances. The lifts used to break down all the time. Sometimes it wouldn't go to certain floors or it wouldn't work at all.

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On these occasions he would have to take the stairs – it is hundreds of stairs from the 17th floor. My parents got stuck in the lift several times. Once they got stuck and all of the lights went out, and my father nearly had a panic attack. I got stuck myself once – it was scary. There were no fire extinguishers in the hallways, and no windows or adequate ventilation in the stairwells or the hallways. There was only one entrance in and out. After the new gas pipes and water pipes were fitted in the building they remained exposed and weren't properly covered – you could see them right above your head.

7. It was hard-working, working class people living in Grenfell. Everyone got along with each other. If you saw someone in the lift or in a stairwell, you would say “*Hello, how are you*”. If there was someone elderly you would carry their shopping for them. The community would help them. It was a nice, warm, calm place to be around. Everyone was just getting on with their lives. I remember an elderly white gentleman, who either lived on the floor above us or below, he gave my wife Farhana a box of chocolates for Christmas. I wanted to say thank you – it was a really sweet gesture. He didn't even know us, but the fact that someone would be kind enough to give a box of chocolates and a Christmas card to someone they barely knew – that he had taken the time out to say “Merry Christmas” was such a nice gesture. It was such a large Tower and neither my wife nor I knew the gentleman, so when I went to find him again I couldn't find which flat he lived in or what his door number was.
8. In my statement I refer to my cousin Abdul [REDACTED]. He has a daughter called Jessie, [REDACTED]. I will also refer to [REDACTED], who is my first cousin on my mum's side of the family.

13 June 2017

9. On 13 June I finished work at about 6pm, and then I went straight to my parents' home. I got there at about 8pm, we had *iftar* (breaking the fast) at about 9pm and then I left at around 10pm because I had work the next day and I had to go back [REDACTED]. A week or two before, Farhana my wife went off to her parents to stay for a few days as she was feeling homesick due to just being newly married and living with her husband's

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family. [REDACTED] it felt a bit strange and she asked me if she could go home for a few days. So Farhana was with her family that evening. There was nothing to worry me as I left Grenfell Tower on Tuesday night at 10pm, everything seemed normal to me. It takes about an hour and 20 minutes to get home by train and bus. I used to call my mum to let her know that I got home safely all the time so that she wouldn't get worried.

10. We would have our meal and then pray, which is the fourth prayer of the day. As I was leaving, my mum was just getting ready to pray. I liked to hear her say "*Allah r'' Awlaa*", which means "*I bless you in the name of God, may He take you to your destination safely*" before I went home, but on that night as she was praying I said to her in English "*Mum I'm going*". She didn't hear me the first time so I said again, "*Mum I'm going*" and then the second time her concentration broke from prayer. Then she said that blessing to me. This always made me feel at peace whenever I heard my mum say that blessing before leaving my parent's home.
11. I got home at 11:02pm and then called my mum to let her know I was home. She said "*That's fine son, I'm glad you're home*", and then she said that she was feeling a bit tired, and she had a headache, so she was going to sleep. That was the last time I spoke to my mum.
12. I spoke to my wife between 12 to 1.30am. I was getting something ready to eat and then straight after, as I was getting ready to go to bed, I got a phone call from my cousin [REDACTED] at around 01:57am.

14 June 2017

First awareness

13. At 01:57am my cousin [REDACTED], who is my first cousin on my mother's side, called me. Normally I don't expect a call at around 2am from anyone. So I was shocked when she called this late. I could see her name flashing up on my phone screen. Something clicked straight away. I knew it couldn't be good news – I always spoke to her in the

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day whenever we spoke, but we only spoke occasionally – here and there. I answered the phone and said *“Hey cuz – are you okay? Is everything okay? You’re calling quite late”*. She said *“Yeah I’m okay but I’ve got some news to tell you. Where are you?”* I told her, *“I’m at home”*. She said *“What are you doing?”* I said *“I’m about to go to bed.”* She told me to *“Sit down”*, and I said *“You’re worrying me”*. She said *“There’s been a fire and your family are all trapped in their flat. They say that the flat is pitch black and they can’t see anything. Me and your brother in law are heading there now.”* I thought this can’t be – I left them all perfectly fine a few hours before. I didn’t want to believe her.

14. My second oldest niece, who is my first cousin Abdul’s daughter from my father’s side of the family, called Jessie who called me. She said *“Hi are you okay? It’s me Jessie. I’m sorry that I’m calling you this late but I’ve got some really bad news for you. Your parent’s home is on fire as well as Grenfell Tower and my dad has been there for the last 10-15 minutes, he’s taken a video of the building. I’ve sent the video to you on your phone so have a look at it”*. She sent this video to me via WhatsApp at 01:38am and I exhibit it as MAH/1. When I saw it my heart just sank. I didn’t know what to say or do. I started panicking. Straight after I got off the phone to Jessie, my cousin Abdul called me, he was shouting *“Where the hell are you? Where the hell are you? Your family’s trapped in their flat - they are all going to die. The building is completely on fire.”* When I heard that I felt a million times worse – what could I do from here? I was in my flat, miles away, more than an hour and a half away. Unfortunately I don’t drive so I called a minicab.
15. At 3:08am, just as I got into the cab and I was about to close the cab door, my sister Husna, the youngest of my siblings called me. She said *“There’s a fire and we are all trapped in our flat. You’re my older brother, please forgive me if I’ve ever hurt you. I don’t think we’re going to make it.”* – and then she cut the call. I tried calling her back. I called my brothers, my mother and my father but the phones kept on going to voicemail, no-one was picking up. I couldn’t think of anyone else to call. I was sat in the cab with the door open, with one foot on the street and one inside the cab. The cab driver was Bangladeshi so I spoke to him in Bengali and I told him what was going on.

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I told him to drive as fast as he could. He said *"I have to drive legally, but I will go as fast as I can, and take the shortest routes, because I do understand your situation, and I'm sorry, I pray that God saves them and they come out safely from the building."*

16. As I got there, I could see smoke coming from the Tower from miles away. As we got closer the roads were blocked. They were blocked with police, ambulances, and huge crowds of people. I couldn't get through the crowds properly but I managed to get as close as I could, just outside of Latimer Road station where I had a better view to see the Tower. There were bits of debris in the roads. It was black foam that came off the building. I think I got to the area outside the Tower between 3.30am and 4am. I waited there for a good couple of hours. I couldn't go through the crowds. All sorts of people were asking me questions.
17. I took a video outside Latimer Road station at 06:01. I was standing in the gap by the station watching the Tower burn. I exhibit this video as MAH/2. I was there until 8am. My cousin Abdul said *"You've waited here enough. If there's any news the police will let us know. Stay at my house for a few days while you decide what to do"*. Abdul lives [REDACTED] about a 10-12 minute drive away from the Tower. He told me he got a call from my sister at about 1am and rushed to the Tower. Abdul told his daughter Jessie, who told me. Abdul had quite a bit of contact with my family. My sister asked him to come and get the family. He had just come back from his [REDACTED] shift and was just about to get into bed. She said that they were all going to go into the bathroom.
18. The video I have at 01:38 shows that the fire wasn't that bad, it was just on one side. I can't see any water being used in the video. I did not see any tall ladders or cherry pickers that the LFB use for tall buildings at that time or later. I heard someone say that they were in Surrey. London is where the tower blocks are, so why Surrey?
19. It appeared to me that many firefighters couldn't get close enough to the fire because they built the BetterGym, and they couldn't get close enough. The pillars were in the way – I thought at the time: 'why don't they just ram them down?'

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20. The fire was ferocious. If they had told people to evacuate they still might have had a chance. I feel like the “Stay put” policy is like telling people to die. I didn’t see any firemen put any water onto the building, even at the time that I arrived. Maybe they took a pause or something for whatever reason, I don’t know. But I could see that not enough was being done to stop the fire and the firemen were dilly dallying and moving very slow.
21. The fire took away everything. My sister was supposed to get married on 29 July 2017. The hall was paid for, the caterer was paid for, everything was ready. It was a happy time for us. I knew how happy I was on my wedding day, and that my sister looked forward to hers. She was very excited for her wedding, and we used to talk about it a lot. She was 22 years old. My youngest brother was 26. Hamid, who was the second eldest, was 28 years old [REDACTED].
22. Two or three weeks after the fire, two liaison officers came round to my cousin Abdul’s house where I was staying at the time, before I moved to the hotel. The main liaison officer DC Lina Whitby came over and gave me the news. First they told me about my mum and my sister. They were the first to be identified. Later they gave me the news that they had identified the remains of my dad and my brothers.

Documents, photographs and related

23. There is now produced and shown to me referred to as “MAH/1” and “MAH/2” the two pieces of video referred to at §14 and §17 respectively. “MAH/1” was recorded by my cousin Jessie and sent to me via WhatsApp at 01:38. “MAH/2” was recorded to my mobile phone at 06:01.

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Statement of Truth

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

I confirm that I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

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