

“There are people who died in there—and they’re not telling us who they are.”

Anger grows over Grenfell Tower inferno

Our reporters
4 July 2017

Nearly three weeks after the Grenfell Tower inferno, anger is growing in the surrounding Lancaster West housing estate in North Kensington. The callous treatment of survivors by council authorities and the Conservative government, the state’s cover-up of the death toll and its failure to press criminal charges against those responsible are fuelling protest and indignation.

Locals told a *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team that hundreds of residents in the low-rise council houses next to Grenfell Tower are still without gas and hot water. The boilers that supplied their homes with gas were located in the basement of Grenfell Tower and destroyed by the fire. Despite this, many residents—including at least one from the burnt-out tower block—are still being charged rent.

Hundreds have been forced to rely on makeshift and temporary accommodation in nearby hotels, churches and community centres and many were left homeless for days.

Mo At-Tu, 18, lives on Grenfell Walk, directly opposite Grenfell Tower. He lost five members of his family in the fire—his aunt Fouza; his uncle Abdul; and their three children, Yasin, 21; Nurhuda, 15; and Mehdi, eight.

His friend, **Jake Patten**, 20, lives on Clarendon Road, just around the corner from the Tower.

Mo explained, “I was living with my cousins on Grenfell Walk. When the fire happened, we got evacuated by the police and they didn’t tell us where to go. They just left us out there on the street. I was sleeping out on the streets for about six or seven days, with another 10-15 residents. Westway [Leisure Centre] wouldn’t let us in, because apparently, there

was a waiting list, and it was pretty upsetting. How can you be outside, just getting little mattresses supplied by St Clements Church, which obviously helped, but not that much. On Thursday, I saw [Prime Minister] Theresa May myself, and she just walked straight past me and every single other resident when we were shouting her name.”

Hundreds of residents of the low-rise blocks were in the same situation, being moved from hotel to hotel. “The next day, you’re out on the streets and they’re not able to sort any accommodation out for you.”

Jake added, “The government has done nothing. No one has been around. My sister-in-law, she lives in the block here. She’s been staying at my mum’s house for nearly three weeks because there’s no hot water, no electricity and no gas—and there’s 500-600 homes, just in this little area alone.”

Jake was in Grenfell Tower 15 minutes before the fire started and was called by a friend who told him the Tower was on fire. He filmed the blaze on his phone and the footage was later aired on BBC’s *Panorama*. The video shows how fast the flames spread up from level four, with firefighters attempting to douse the flames from the narrow street-level approach to the Tower, with just a single hose.

Asked if the fire brigade had easy access to the building, Jake said. “No! I’m telling you, this area was all good before they [built] the school, the swimming pool. If you look at the film *Kidulthood* [shot in West London and released in 2006] you are going to see what this area used to be like. As soon as they did that up, that’s when it became a death trap. Where the school is, there were three football pitches and there was a big car park to fit a hundred cars. That’s enough to get 50

fire engines in.”

Mo agreed: “There was no easy access for them to get in.”

Asked if they saw fire engines having difficulty getting in, Jake said, “Yes. Very difficult. They were recording it themselves on their mobile phones on their way here to put out the fire. They were on the way here and filming it and they were literally shocked. They were saying there is no way we are going to be able to put this out in time. It was spreading so quick. Within 15 minutes the building was all alight. Within 25 minutes it had spread all around. I couldn’t sleep for three days because of the fire... because I was angry and shocked.”

“The real word is not getting out there in the media. The truth hasn’t got out there yet. These people don’t want to realise the answers yet.”

Jake added, “The BBC is telling nonsense.”

Mo said, “They don’t want to release the answers yet. They want to make the area go quiet. In the first couple of days [after the fire] this area used to be packed. Now it’s going quiet bit by bit.”

On Theresa May’s visit in the days after the fire, in which she refused to meet survivors or local residents, Mo said, “What actually hurt me is that you’re the prime minister yourself and you paid us no respect. On the first days she came, she just literally walked past everyone. She only went to speak to the police and fire brigade. She realised she made a mistake and she came back the next day, but it was too late for that, so obviously, everyone was trying to chase her down the road.”

“She’s all for the rich,” said Jake.

Asked why he thought the government was not releasing the true number of fatalities, Mo said, “To be honest I think they can’t release the number as it looks like it’s worse than a terrorist attack and it looks like someone just got a bomb and dropped it there. Because even if someone did try to do a terrorist attack, nothing like this would happen. It wouldn’t destroy everyone. This has basically destroyed everyone at a certain time when everyone was at home, asleep.”

Both Mo and Jake agreed that the council was operating a policy of social cleansing to force working class people out of the borough.

Jake said, “They are moving everyone to the north like Leeds, Bristol, Manchester.” Mo agreed: “They’ve

been planning this for more than 10 years. They’ve been planning to get the poor people out of the area. And the other thing I don’t get is that they put the old people on the top floors and the young people on the bottom floors. People who are disabled in a wheelchair on the top floor! Think about it. If there is a fire how are they going to escape?”

While WSWs reporters spoke with Jake and Mo, a woman angered by the lies over the death toll, Linda Maidment, came over. She exclaimed, “It’s disgusting! Why don’t they report it?”

Pointing at Grenfell Tower, she said, “There’s 600 people living in that block. Six hundred, and they’ve only reported 80 [fatalities]. We’re not stupid. We know how many people [were] in that block. We saw them all on fire and they are not doing [anything] for them.”

Linda lives in Avondale Park Road. She explained her son and husband watched the fire develop for six minutes before the fire engines arrived, because they closed the nearby Ladbroke Grove fire station. “Where are the fire engines for the people?”

“There are people who died in there and they are not telling us who they are. Where are all these people—the 600 people? And they are saying it’s 80 people [dead]. It’s absolutely rubbish and they can’t possibly think that the people around here believe that there are only 80 people.”

Asked why she thought the government was lying, she said, “Because there would be a riot. Because of everything that is going on.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)