

UK: Residents march against social cleansing by Newham Labour council

Our reporters
14 August 2017

East London residents demonstrated Saturday against Labour Party-run Newham Borough Council's attacks on the right to decent, affordable housing.

They marched from Ferrier Point tower block in Canning Town to Tanner Point in Plaistow. Tower Point has the same flammable cladding as Grenfell Tower, which was a central factor in the rapid spread of the June 14 fire. From there marchers proceeded to the Carpenters Estate, which is earmarked for demolition.

The March of the Towers was organised by the Focus E15 Mothers campaign. Health workers, including mental health workers, social workers and teachers participated in the march in solidarity.

At the Carpenters Estate rally, an SEP member explained the criminal character of the Grenfell Tower inferno and urged people to attend the SEP public meeting in London on Saturday August 19 entitled *Grenfell Fire—Social Murder: A crime against the working class*. (see details below)

Newham Council is removing residents in Carpenters in order to give the land to private developers for luxury private schemes. The council is also refusing to house the homeless in the Carpenters Estate even though there are 400 vacant houses available.

Years of deregulations, privatisation, cutbacks and the slashing of social housing by successive Labour and Conservative governments resulted in the Grenfell inferno, which brought to light in a tragic manner the housing crisis and terrible social conditions facing working class families in London and across the country. Slum-like conditions face those who have been relocated, but have elected to remain within the Newham Borough. Residents have suffered rent hikes alongside the use of cheap cladding.

At Tanner Point tower, a resident, Charlotte, read a letter to protesters that she received on July 20 from the

council. This told residents that the building they lived in had the same cladding as Grenfell Tower. Charlotte said that she is now living with a bath filled with water and a blanket near the bath because if there is a fire she will wrap her child in a wet blanket and try to escape.

A Socialist Equality Party team distributed hundreds of leaflets inviting those at the protest to attend its public meeting in London.

Chantelle Dean, an unemployed mother of one who lives in private accommodation in Newham, has been fighting the threat to evict her and the ill treatment she has received at the hands of Newham Council since January.

She said, "I was being evicted by a private landlord. That place was given to me by the Newham council in 2013 when my son was born. He wants me to leave and I got a Section 21. That's the first protocol you get when they want you evicted. Then you have two months. The council said you cannot leave and you have to stay. I told them that I am afraid I am going to get court costs as the landlord was sending threatening texts. He was saying things like 'You are going to be billed for this' and 'I am going to take you to court.' I have got proof of council's emails saying 'Do not worry you won't be billed and if you leave it won't help you at all.'

"Then I was taken to court and the council said it was nothing to do with them. I had to pay £350 in court costs. I had to pay it to my landlord directly. The council shut me down at every single turn.

"When I told them about the situation with my son they did not consider it. I've got medical issues to do with my back spasms and I get help from my mother. They said to me that they would assess my case only on my medical merits. If they think it adequate then they will keep me in Newham. If they don't they will send

me out of Newham—more than likely to Birmingham or Manchester. I am not seen as a priority as I don't work at the moment. I've got a degree and I want to work when my son starts going to school. I don't want to be on benefits. If they send me out of London I will lose all my support network of family and friends.

"This whole process is a disgrace. It is very stressful physically, emotionally and mentally. My son and I lived in limbo for more than eight months. I know it is not only me. So many poor working-class families are facing the same sort of situations as a result of the lack of social housing, privatisation and cutbacks. This is widespread. This is definitely social cleansing! That is why I am trying to stand up against this.

"We all know that the Grenfell Tower fire was bound up with social cleansing. It is an area that they see as potential development. It is in the middle of a rich area. They want the poor shifted out of that area. When you lose everything they think they can put you anywhere.

"You've got luxury empty apartments there. They don't want to put the survivors in them because they want to sell these apartments to foreign wealthy investors. What about the people living in London? We need somewhere to live as well. When you look around here I can imagine Grenfell Tower. Around there as well, how many new builds are they selling to rich foreign investors? They don't give them to the people who need them. On the Carpenters Estate, they've got 400 homes empty. They want it to be demolished! I think we the people need to step up for a solution now."

Mr and Mrs Ismail attended the march with their three children. They are housing and human rights campaigners and have provided free legal support to those in the Newham area facing eviction. They now face their own legal case and have been placed in emergency accommodation.

Mr Ismail said, "We first lived in Stratford, and then we got evicted and re-housed in north London. The council tried to send us to Birmingham, Lancashire, Scotland and to so many other areas. We fought against that and we know many other families are facing the same type of problems. We are trying to make them aware of the injustice they face at the hands of councils and authorities. We want people to come out and fight against these attacks and we are standing with them. At the beginning we didn't have many with us. Now people are starting to realise that they can fight back.

We believe that they are trying to push people out of London.

"We are under an imperialist and capitalist system with minority control of everything. They want to privatise everything to make money. They will do anything to make money and human lives are of no matter to them. Councils can run properties as public properties, but they don't want to do it anymore. There are networks of private companies working with councils profiteering from the privatisation of social housing."

Public Meeting

Grenfell Fire—Social Murder: A crime against the working class

Saturday August 19, 2:30 p.m.

Harrow Club

187 Freston Rd

London, W10 6TH (*nearest Tube: Latimer Road*)

Facebook event



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact