London residents hold silent march for Grenfell victims

Our reporters
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Around 500 local residents and others from London boroughs marched through the area surrounding Grenfell Tower on Monday evening to mark two months since the fire.

The march was the second such event, and was significantly larger than that held on July 14. The organisers, Grenfell United, said the event was held "to pay respect to those who are no longer with us."

A number of those participating, including children, carried placards reading, "Justice for Grenfell: We demand the truth."

Some attended the march on crutches and in wheelchairs. It began at Notting Hill Methodist Church, just a few yards from the burnt-out tower. Many carried a candle on the route or wore a yellow ribbon in honour of those who perished in the fire and those still missing. The Metropolitan Police claim that around 80 people died in the inferno and two months later only 49 of these have been formally identified. Many residents believe that the real fatality figure is significantly higher.

The march continued in a dignified silence through the residential streets of north Kensington and down Ladbroke Grove, the main thoroughfare, before returning to its starting point, where a short rally was held.

Speakers said they would continue to fight for justice for the victims and survivors and hold a silent vigil each month. A number of those present chanted, "No justice. No peace."

Despite an initial pledge from Prime Minister Theresa May that those made homeless would be rehoused within three weeks, almost nine weeks have passed with the vast majority still not rehoused in suitable, permanent accommodation. According to figures from the Conservative-run Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Council 134 families are still in temporary accommodation, i.e. hotels and Bed and Breakfasts. On top of this another 24 households from Grenfell Walk whose homes were destroyed in the fire are living in hotels and Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

The dispossessed now face up to a year or more of living in such intolerable conditions, with entire families crammed into one or two rooms, and with Sajid Javid, the Minister for Communities and Local Government, writing to state that they will be rehoused "as quickly as possible."

The callous attitude of the authorities, who are fully responsible for the social murder of the Grenfell Tower residents, is further confirmed in the fact that so far just 15 percent of the £18.9 million received in donations from the public has been given to survivors. The Charity Commission revealed this week that just £2.8 million has reached survivors, many of whom lost family members and their entire possessions.

At the conclusion of the rally, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to Caul Grant, who is from east London and is a father. He said, "I came here because when I saw Grenfell Tower on fire that was the most horrendous thing I have ever seen in my life. The other day I was driving across Marylebone Flyover and I wasn't expecting it and the building just came into view and it was just racing towards me and it brought back to me the time when the building was on fire. I just can't imagine what these people are going through living here on a daily basis having to put up with that building as it is.

"I believe there is something dreadfully wrong with our system and as a result of it things like this happen. It's a crying shame that in 2017 we have to have an incident like this before the common people are able to have a voice. I think it was Martin Luther King who

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said a riot is the voice of the unheard. I certainly hope that the people of Grenfell get justice and that justice will be seen to be done, otherwise I think the country will be rioting.

"If this community is properly organised with their demands I believe it is capable of getting justice because the whole world is watching and I think it will be very difficult for them to do an injustice.

"We've had Hillsborough and the whole country, the whole world has seen that it took almost 30 years to bring any justice for them, so I don't think there is anyone in this country who would want to deny these people justice and who would not support them. I believe that the Grenfell fire can be a real development to revolution in this country."

In April 1989, 96 Liverpool football club supporters were crushed to death at Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield due to police opening a main gate and directing them into two dangerously overcrowded pens on the terraces. The official report into the deaths ordered by the then-Conservative government resulted in no one being charged, made to stand trial, or even disciplined. It took 27 years for the families of the victims to secure prosecutions through the findings of the Hillsborough Independent Panel in the face of bitter hostility from successive Tory and Labour governments.

"For a person to perish alive in a fire is the worst, as far as I am concerned," Grant added. "For a mother, a parent to make a choice: which is the best way for my child to die--in a fire or thrown out of the window? And a human being had to make such a choice on that night. And that is unforgivable.

"For me as a father to hear a father say that the last conversation he had with his 12-year-old daughter was 'Daddy come and get me', and he wasn't able to as he wasn't allowed to get near. That is torture. Absolute torture. These people must get justice. Personally, whatever it takes to support the quest for justice, I will do."

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