

Grenfell Tower fire: “I believe that it is social cleansing, and we are now seeing the result of it”

Our reporters
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WSWS reporters spoke to residents of Ladbroke Grove this week about the Grenfell Tower and the Socialist Equality Party’s public meeting to be held Saturday August 19, in London, “Grenfell Fire—Social Murder: A crime against the working class”.

Ismel has lived in Ladbroke Grove for five years. With the cost of living in the capital she is forced to hold down three jobs: “I came from Germany and am a designer, waitress, bartender, a hard working person.”

Two months after the fire, the authorities had to be compelled to give a true account of the number of fatalities at Grenfell Tower and how many survived. Ismel said, “The numbers should be official by now. How many people survived, how many people haven’t. How come they are still hiding it? At the moment it still seems not near the number we expect.

“Also the £20 million that has been raised from the public, it has still not been given to the families, or not to all the families. I hear stories of people living in hotels, people having to chase the money. There are not that many people who survived. They should be able to get the numbers and names and get money out to them, to at least buy them a flat or some good accommodation.

“All the money is there, all the clothes, the accommodation. I think the money is in corrupt hands. There has been so much fundraising around the area. How come the fundraising has been in the area and the people still haven’t been given the money? They are not in trustful hands. That is what I think.

“The whole story from the beginning, all the community who were friends and family, they helped. It’s maybe a bit exaggerated, but you wonder if this was all an accident? These questions are open because

the results are there, the numbers are still hidden, the money has not been given. There is a chain reaction. So I think it’s more of a crime than an accident.

“They talk about ethnic cleansing, I believe that it is social cleansing, and we are now seeing the result of it. They are probably going to knock down this tower now and build a property only affordable for a rich man’s hand.

“It was night-time, a lot of Muslims, people who are not socially strong. There are working class, not rich people in the Tower. It confirms what you say—social murder.

“I am Turkish. My parents were immigrants who came here from Turkey in the 1960s. So when it comes to culture, separation, these injustices, after five years I have a sense of what it is about and that fire was definitely a crime.”

Paula has lived in London since 1980 and used to be a street busker in Ladbroke Grove in the 1960s. She said, “The dead have already paid for it. The grieving relatives have already paid and now the council tax will pay the price [for any prosecution]. I didn’t know what you said, that Corporate Manslaughter is a qualitatively different charge. It means that nobody is going to pay.”

The Metropolitan Police said they may bring charges of corporate manslaughter, but under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 Act, *individuals* cannot be held responsible and brought to justice. The Act stipulates that only corporations as an entity can be found guilty of such a charge, not those leading the companies. The most that will happen, if the council and/or the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation—the body which managed Grenfell Tower on behalf of the residents—are found

guilty of corporate manslaughter, is that they will receive a fine and carry on with business as usual. As public entities, the taxpayers will foot the bill.

Paula continued, “These people in the council are so arrogant. I saw [Nicolas] Paget-Brown [the former Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council leader] leaving the council meeting where he had attempted to bar residents from it after the fire. The council had applied to the court to prevent the public being present and just minutes before the meeting they got a letter from the High Court saying ‘No, they have a right to be present.’ And quite rightly they came in and were expressing public outrage from the gallery and they [the council officials] realised that the only way to dodge rotten tomatoes or worse was by getting up and walking out. Paget-Brown then got up and left in a big expensive car.

“They showed in one of the news reports on TV the actual document where the contractor submitted the quote to the leader of the council and they decided to save some money. And so they cut the cost of the cladding they were going to put in and never bothered to test the quality of the replacement and that wasn’t fireproof. The original cladding proposed was fireproof.

“If a decision was made by someone knowing that a fire could take place that would be homicidal intent. And I don’t know if they could ever establish that in court. They can always say we assumed all these things are fireproof. But they were definitely guilty of negligence. I would certainly help fund an appeal for people to be put behind bars for this for negligence.”



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