

Right-wing media launch witch-hunt against Grenfell activist Joe Delaney

Barry Mason, Robert Stevens
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Three right-wing newspapers have launched a filthy coordinated attack on Grenfell activist and North Kensington resident Joe Delaney.

Rupert Murdoch's *Sunday Times* led on February 24 with an article headlined, "'Homeless' Grenfell Tower activist Joe Delaney has flat" with a subtitle alleging, "A campaigner claiming cash for food while put up in a hotel is still using his own home."

The tabloid *Sun*—also owned by Murdoch—and the *Daily Mail* recycled these smears against Delaney the next day.

Delaney is living in a hotel room after he was evacuated following the Grenfell Tower fire that killed 71 people. But according to the *Times*, *Mail* and *Sun*, he is living the high-life on the public purse, "still using his north Kensington apartment" while "claiming food allowances of up to £300 per week and has a hotel room funded by the taxpayer."

All three newspapers referred to Delaney as being "homeless," in quotation marks.

The *Times* article is a political sting operation in the best traditions of the Murdoch press, complete with surveillance and undercover photography and unexplained access to Delaney's personal data:

"A *Sunday Times* investigation found Delaney had not regularly been using the room paid for by the council at the Novotel hotel in west London," wrote *Times* journalist Gabriel Pogrund. "Last week, he was photographed by this newspaper on two occasions leaving his flat close to Grenfell in the morning."

Officials from the Conservative-run Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) council have denied accusations they supplied tenancy and financial records to the *Times*, but no credence can be given to their denials.

The accusations by the *Times*, *Mail* and *Sun* should

be met with contempt by the thousands of Grenfell residents who know Delaney, and by workers and young people in the UK and internationally who have solidarized themselves with the victims of Grenfell.

Delaney is being attacked for the crime of ... visiting his old flat. As for £300 in living expenses, this equates to just £42 a day for three meals in one of the world's most expensive cities. Delaney, like hundreds of other survivors and residents surrounding Grenfell Tower, still has no cooking facilities and no safe home.

On February 8, the Grenfell Action Group (GAG) described conditions for residents of Hurstway, Testerton, Barandon and Grenfell Walkways surrounding Grenfell Tower where many are still dealing with "intermittent hot water and central heating" more than eight months after the fire.

GAG quoted the council's own admission that there were "problems with intercom systems, gas supplies and interruptions to heating and hot water" and that "additional fire safety works had not yet been completed on the block." As a result, "at least 66 households have not moved back to the estate."

Not a word of any of this found its way into the *Times*' so-called investigation.

In an interview with the Grenfell Action Group (GAG), Delaney explained what it's like for nearby residents: "People are still either living in a crime scene or stuck in hotels, yet RBKC believe that they can resume charges for services that residents are not benefiting from in buildings that are still unsafe and unfit for purpose ...

"The tower hasn't even been covered so people not only live in the shadow of a crime scene, they are also forced to view the charred remnants of a building in which their friends, family and neighbours horribly perished."

Is it any wonder that Delaney, like hundreds of other traumatised residents, wants permanent accommodation away from Grenfell Tower?

Delaney, whose block faces Grenfell, was woken within minutes of the fire on June 14 and rushed onto the street with neighbours to try and alert those asleep in Grenfell Tower. Along with GAG, he had warned about a possible “catastrophic event” resulting from the “dangerous living conditions” at Grenfell Tower and “the neglect of health and safety legislation that [RBKC] inflict upon their tenants and leaseholders.”

But according to the *Times* and Pogrund, it is Delaney who is the criminal!

The campaign against Delaney was launched just four days after Grime artist Stormzy used his appearance at this year’s music BRIT Awards to launch an impassioned attack on Prime Minister Theresa May and her Conservative government over Grenfell. The event was broadcast live on prime time to millions.

After performing his song, “Blinded By Your Grace,” Stormzy launched into an unscripted denunciation of the May government and its responsibility for the fire. He rapped, “Yo Theresa May, where’s the money for Grenfell? Do you think we’ve just forgotten about Grenfell? You’re criminals! You got the cheek to call us savages, you should do some jail time, you should pay some damages. We should burn your house down and see if you can manage this!”

Stormzy’s heartfelt lyrics went viral on social media because millions feel the same way about trying to stop a cover-up by the government and authorities who are responsible for mass murder at Grenfell.

The day after the BRIT Awards, Stormzy urged his million-plus Twitter followers to add their signatures to a petition by survivors of the Grenfell fire calling for measures to prevent the May government’s official inquiry from perpetrating a whitewash. Within hours, tens of thousands signed the petition, quickly surpassing the 100,000 signatures needed to force a debate in Parliament. More than 150,000 people have now signed.

The class sentiments evoked by Grenfell have evoked fear and hatred in ruling circles.

Following Stormzy’s appearance, several Tory MPs denounced ITV for allowing the rapper’s comments to be aired, sending a letter of protest to ITV head, Sir Peter Bazalgette. The attack on Delaney is of a piece

with this authoritarian response, aimed at suppressing the fight by Grenfell survivors and their supporters for justice.

The witch-hunt against Delaney is only the latest attack on Grenfell campaigners by the media, which will stop at nothing to prevent the truth emerging and has appealed to the most right-wing and fascistic forces that have been encouraged to vent against Delaney and survivors of Grenfell on social media.

Earlier this month, the *Times* and *Daily Mail* attacked the documentary film *Failed by the State: the Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell* as Russian propaganda. The film exposed the responsibility of the ruling class for social murder in Britain’s wealthiest borough. Prior to that, Justice for Grenfell and other left-wing organisations and activists were singled out for attack, with the *Times* and *Sun* leading the pack.

The Socialist Equality Party has established the Grenfell Fire Forum to fight for the independent interests of the working class. We are encouraging the fullest democratic discussion and participation. The fight for justice means opposing all of the institutions and representatives of the capitalist state, including the May government’s official inquiry.

The next meeting of the Grenfell Fire Forum will be held on Saturday March 17 at 2 p.m. at the Maxilla Social Club. Full details below. For further information visit the Grenfell Fire Forum Facebook and Twitter pages.

Maxilla Social Club
2 Maxilla Walk
London, W10 6SW
(nearest tube: Latimer Road)

The author recommends:

Grenfell fire families challenge government inquiry cover-up
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