

# Relatives' tributes at Grenfell Tower Inquiry blame government for deaths

Robert Stevens  
29 May 2018

The first week of commemoration tributes by family and friends to the 72 victims of the Grenfell Tower fire ended last Friday, in the opening stages of the official government inquiry.

So far, tributes have been given for 47 of those who died in last year's June 14 inferno.

The tributes continue today and are expected to conclude this week.

This writer was present during the session Friday, in which tributes were heard for Vincent Chiejina, 60, Ligaya Moore, 78, and the El-Wahabi family—Abdulaziz, 52, Fouzia, 42, and their three children, Yasin, 20, Nur Huda 16, and 8-year-old Mehdi. Tributes were presented for Khadija Khalloufi, 52, and Jessica Urbano Ramirez, 12. A commemoration was heard for the Kedir family—Hashim, 44, Nura Jemal, 35, and their three children, son Yahya, 13, daughter Firdaws, 12, and son Yaqub, 6.

Finally, a tribute was heard for Steve Power, 63.

Family members frequently broke down as they remembered their loved ones in moving and emotional scenes. Close relatives and friends were often shaken and in tears. Children have given tributes to family members and friends, including the 18 children who died. Sara Chebiouni, just nine years old, spoke of her memories of her eight-year-old cousin, Mehdi El-Wahabi.

Such has been the toll on those giving tributes and those listening that people have collapsed and required medical assistance.

The enormity of the crimes committed by the authorities against those who suffered the most gruesome deaths imaginable is made clear in the tributes given.

On Wednesday, Marjorie Vital, 68, and her son Ernie, 50, were remembered in a video narrated by Marjorie's

surviving son. He says, "You can see people downstairs in the building, the crowd building and whatever. It got worse and an hour later they are still in the building. I can see my mother and brother now making secondary plans for survival and going out of the windows is not an option. They went to the top floor of the tower itself."

Footage is shown of the stairs leading to the top of the 24-storey tower. "I imagined my mother practically being carried by my brother to that top floor. Amidst all that smoke, and there they are, fortunate to have an open door. We don't know if it was already abandoned or whatever.

"They entered the flat and they made their way to the bathroom. I imagine myself as my brother in that bathroom, filling the bath with water. We are now in the bath and there's no way I'm leaving my mother and my mother wouldn't leave me. And also there's the sense of the security in that last moment knowing you're not alone."

The remains of Marjorie and Ernie were found in the tub, with the narration explaining, "We now have the evidence that their bodies were fused together in the intensity of the fire. ..."

The bereaved continue to castigate the government and local authorities, holding them responsible for the deaths.

The testimony of Assema Kedir Habib, sister of Hashim Kedir, was read out by her lawyer, Mark Scott.

"The Grenfell Tower fire has taken even more from me and my family. It has also stolen our father, my hero, the main reason for whatever good is inside me. Our father died only 12 days after he was told that his beloved child has perished with his whole family. He persistently denied at the beginning that something this horrible could happen to his generous, devout and

loving son and that he could survive his own beloved grandchildren.

“He died when he finally realised that they were in fact gone after only three days in a hospital bed. How can one make sense of losing six family members at the same time?

“We as a family are left with nothing. Absolutely nothing. Grenfell Tower was on fire for more than 24 hours. We were literally watching our loved ones turn from alive, waving and begging for help from windows, to ashes. We were watching all the time. ...

“I still have a problem of accepting the fact that the UK, one of the most powerful countries in the world, couldn't do anything more in the year 2017 to save them, to save what was left of them. Why wasn't more done to save our loved ones? Why didn't the UK as a government try to do more that night? Why wasn't more done to at least save their dead bodies? Was it because the lives of the victims of Grenfell Tower didn't matter? Was it because our pain doesn't matter? Was the cost of trying to do more, higher than the lives of our loved ones? Was a price set for the precious, unfairly short-lived lives of Yaqub, 6, Firdaws, 12, and Yahya, 13?

“Dying is one thing, how to die is another thing, and how you were treated after you died is a third thing. Our family members were let down on all three levels. They were made to live in a chimney with a stay-put instruction hanging on their wall long before the fire. They were instructed repeatedly, and for a long time, to stay in their flat, although everyone understood, starting from the first 20 minutes of the fire, that the fire was far from usual. They were cremated unwillingly.

“Move on. To move on is to put something behind you, forget about it and never look back. Go on. To go on is to forever carry it forward with you and never forget. We promise never to move on, but we will try to go on.”

In her commemoration for Steve Power, who had lived in Grenfell Tower for 32 years, his daughter Sherrie told the inquiry “I do know that my dad wasn't in the tower when the fire started, but he came back to wake me up out of my sleep. ...

“Like everyone else, we were told to remain in our homes by authorities, so we did. It wasn't a peaceful night; there was panic and drama. He didn't die peacefully in his sleep. In his last moments, I don't

know what he was feeling; I don't know if he was scared, waiting for someone or simply waiting to die.”

His former partner, Claudia Davis, said he “was my first love and the father of my first son, Wayne. ... This can never, ever, ever happen again, and it's got to be justice for Grenfell.”

Addressing Justice Martin Moore-Bick, heading the inquiry, she said, “So I have to say this to you because for a year I want to scream at someone, I want to argue with someone, I want to deal with things like we deal with things on the street, whatever it is. So, what I'm saying, Sir Martin, you do right by us all and you will do right by my—my children. Everybody else's, yeah, but you will do right by my children, because I can't fight you, I can't argue with you and I can't turn up and knock on Theresa May's door, yeah?”

*The transcripts for each day of the Inquiry proceedings, including the livestream with video tributes are available at the Grenfell Tower inquiry web site*  
<https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/proceedings>.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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