

Inquiry issues cover-up report on Grenfell Tower fire disaster

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The report of the first phase of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry confirms that it is a rotten political cover-up, designed to protect those in the corporate and political elite who are guilty of the horrific murders of 72 men, women and children.

The contempt with which the Conservative government holds the victims of the June 14, 2017, inferno was seen in the agreement between Prime Minister Boris Johnson and inquiry chairman Sir Martin Moore-Bick to publish the report on October 30. This was due to have been the day before Britain exited the European Union and a good day to bury bad news. In the end the UK's exit date was extended.

The remit of the Phase 1 of Moore-Bick's inquiry was limited to establishing how the fire started and spread. Even so, it has taken nearly two and a half years to produce its report. No one responsible for the deaths is held to account by Moore-Bick and, based on the methodology of the report, they never will be.

The report identifies the main factor in the mass loss of life at Grenfell as the cladding of the building in highly dangerous, flammable, toxic cladding. It states, "The principal reason why the flames spread so rapidly up, down and around the building was the presence of the aluminium composite material (ACM) rainscreen panels with polyethylene cores, which acted as a source of fuel."

But having acknowledged what everyone now knows, Moore-Bick's report focuses almost entirely on the mistakes, real and imagined, of the London Fire Brigade (LFB).

The LFB's preparation and planning for a fire such as that at Grenfell Tower was "gravely inadequate," the report states. Moore-Bick said he identified a series of "serious shortcomings in the response of the LFB, both in the operation of the control room and on the incident ground," adding "It is right to recognise that those shortcomings were for the most part systemic in nature."

Within the proper context, an examination of what the LFB did on the night is entirely legitimate, including criticism of how long they stuck to the "stay put" advice telling residents to remain in their flats and await rescue.

But focusing almost exclusively on the LFB's actions on the night serves deliberately to transfer blame away from the real culprits—the Conservative-run Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council (RBKC), its Tenant Management Organisation that ran the tower, and the corporate criminals who, as part of a "refurbishment," transformed Grenfell into a death trap by covering it with the deadly cladding. A list of the guilty includes the heads of the Rydon, Arconic and Celotex corporations, the manufacturers involved.

In addition, Grenfell and many other buildings were made unsafe as a result of the deregulation frenzy imposed by successive Labour and Conservative governments over the last four decades, with corporations allowed to pile up profits with no regard for the health and safety of tenants living in social housing.

Those seeking justice for Grenfell will find it obscene that Moore-Bick identifies LFB control room operators for any mistakes they made, while those actually responsible for the fire at the top levels of local and central government not only continue to walk free but are still running the country!

The most disgusting consequence of Moore-Bick's cover-up is the fact that Boris Johnson, former London Mayor (2008-2016) and current Tory Prime Minister, was free to pontificate in Parliament on its supposed merits. In 2012, Johnson pushed through a 15 percent cut in the £448 million LFB budget. This led to the loss of 10 fire stations, including Knightsbridge in Kensington and Chelsea, and the axing of 14 fire engines and more than 500 firefighter posts. After being confronted at the fire-safety panel of London Assembly Members with the fact that his savage cuts would cost lives, Johnson told

protesting firefighters to “get stuffed.”

Johnson welcomed Moore-Bick’s report even before it came out Tuesday, with the survivors—who had just two days’ prior access to the 1,000-page document—told they couldn’t speak on its contents as it was embargoed.

He said that survivors and relatives “asked for the truth. We promised them the truth. We owe them the truth. And, today, the whole country, the whole world, is finally hearing the truth about what happened at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017.” He concluded, “I hope it strengthens their faith in the Inquiry’s desire to determine the facts of the fire—and in this government’s commitment to airing those facts in public, no matter how difficult they may be, and acting on them. That commitment is absolute.”

Yesterday Johnson led off a debate in Parliament on the report, declaring with a straight face, “The truth will out and justice will be done.”

The main function of the inquiry was always to prevent the guilty from being arrested, charged and tried. If it was not being held, criminal proceedings could already have been under way against those responsible for the fire.

Grenfell wasn’t a tragedy but a crime waiting to happen, with the residents in the Grenfell Action Group warning seven months before the inferno, “Only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord.” On the night, the LFB was faced with a fire that was impossible to control within minutes of it taking hold.

The Tory government of Theresa May worked from the start with its friends who run RBKC to ensure that the mass anger and revulsion over Grenfell could be safely channelled into that tried-and-true institution of the British ruling elite—the public inquiry. But they could only get away with their crimes due to the role of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Fire Brigades Union head Matt Wrack, who endorsed and gave much needed credibility to the inquiry.

Corbyn responded Tuesday evening with a pathetic 107-word statement describing Moore-Bick’s document as an “important report.” He added, “I pay tribute to the heroic actions of firefighters in our country every day, including on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire. It wasn’t firefighters who diluted building regulations or put flammable cladding on Grenfell Tower.”

All this is true, but why then did Corbyn support the inquiry when he knew that those responsible were going to escape any blame and prosecution? Moore-Bick let it be known six months ago that the LFB was going to face “withering criticism” in his report, and still Corbyn

and the FBU backed the inquiry. Wrack did so despite acknowledging that the inquiry was in “danger of turning into a stitch-up of firefighters.”

The report is proof that the inquiry is a politically inspired cover-up, carrying out its glacier-like deliberations entirely on behalf of the guilty. Not a single person responsible will be brought to justice. It was convened under Tony Blair’s 2005 Inquiries Act, which states, “An inquiry panel is not to rule on, and has no power to determine, any person’s civil or criminal liability.” Moore-Bick proposed, with May rushing to agree, that any issues of a “social, economic and political nature,” should be barred from the inquiry.

For more than 28 months, Moore-Bick has raked in almost £1,000 a day as inquiry chairman, and the charade being organised by this hand-picked and trusted representative of the ruling elite is set to continue for years to come. The Metropolitan Police have stated that no one will face any criminal proceedings, if any are ever to be brought, until the inquiry is finished.

It’s high time this stinking fraud is brought to an end. The millions of pounds wasted on the inquiry should be distributed to the Grenfell families whose lives have been destroyed.

The Socialist Equality Party and our Grenfell Fire Forum urge all those fighting for justice for Grenfell to demand that those guilty of the social murder at Grenfell are arrested, charged and put on trial. We urge the Grenfell families and their legal teams to withdraw all cooperation from the inquiry and set about demanding immediate criminal action.

The author recommends: Two years since the Grenfell inferno: The case for socialism

For further information visit the Grenfell Fire Forum Facebook page



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