

Letter from Christchurch building collapse victims in New Zealand to the families of the Tennessee explosives plant disaster

Maan Alkaisi
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The *World Socialist Web Site* is publishing a letter from Maan Alkaisi, whose wife Dr. Maysoon Abbas died in the Christchurch, New Zealand, earthquake on February 22, 2011, to the families of the 16 workers killed in the explosion at Accurate Energetic Systems' factory in Tennessee.

Dr. Abbas was one of 115 people who were killed in the collapse of the CTV Building in Christchurch. A 2012 royal commission of inquiry found that the six-storey building was cheaply constructed in 1986, with major structural defects, and was not compliant with the building code. Alan Reay Consultants, the building's designer, did not provide adequate supervision to the structural engineer working on the project, David Harding. The building had hundreds of design flaws.

Reay failed to rectify the building's deficiencies during the 1986 consent process and again following a 1991 council inspection—similarly, warnings about safety hazards at the AES factory in Tennessee were ignored.

To this day, however, no one has been held accountable for actions that led to one of the deadliest disasters in New Zealand's history. Those responsible include successive Labour Party and National Party governments, which deregulated the construction industry, paving the way for the disaster.

For nearly 15 years, the state has shielded Reay from prosecution. Police prepared to bring manslaughter charges against Reay and Harding, but despite overwhelming evidence supporting such charges, the case was dropped in late 2017 after the intervention of then Deputy Solicitor General Brendan Horsley.

My name is Maan Alkaisi, I am the spokesperson for the families who lost loved ones due to the collapse of the CTV building in an earthquake that occurred back in February 2011 in Christchurch, New Zealand. The tragic collapse that resulted in the loss of 115 people was because of greed and lack of a building safety inspection system.

I would like to send you my sincere condolences for the loss of your loved ones due to the devastating Tennessee explosion and wanted to let you know you are in our thoughts and minds. It is hard to imagine the impact of such a tragedy on people and their lives as we all bereave in different ways. We went through different phases from shock to denial to wanting to know what has happened, who is responsible and demanded those responsible be held into account.

I would like to share with you what helped us cope and eased our struggle. First, being surrounded by supporting family and friends during such difficult times is very important in the healing process. Fulfilling some of the wishes and work of our loved ones makes it feel that they are still around contributing and adding values to our lives and community. Forming the victims' families group was very instrumental in supporting each other, forming special friendships, sharing information and establishing a formal group that speaks on behalf of the families. Not everyone can speak up and articulate the situation describing victims' hardships and needs.

It was important to ask for strong legal and technical teams to help in explaining what happens, who is responsible and what are the processes in legal terms and, most importantly, the legal rights of victims and their families.

Unfortunately, governments usually offer little help and many empty words and should not be relied on when it comes to information and legal rights. For example, the first thing our government did was to cover up and calm us down by endless investigations and unfulfilled promises. We still have two cases against the culprits going on after 15 years of struggle.

We have documented every submission, investigation, report and meeting related to the incident and we set up a digital archive with all the records stored for the case to help chase those responsible and hold them into account.

Our loved ones cannot speak and defend themselves, we will, and we will fight for justice and accountability until justice for victims is done.

My thoughts and sincere condolences to you all who lost loved ones or were injured at the tragic Tennessee explosion that happened on October 10th, 2025.

Regards

Maan Alkaisi, Spokesperson, CTV families
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