

# Nine years after Grenfell inferno, New Scotland Yard declares there is “no presumption” that charges will be brought

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Approaching the ninth anniversary of the deaths of 72 people in the Grenfell Tower inferno, the Metropolitan Police held a press conference this week to announce that 57 individuals and 20 companies could face criminal charges.

New Scotland Yard’s May 19 update, coinciding with the Met’s press conference, declared its investigation into the fire “is on track by the end of September to submit all files for charging decisions to the Crown Prosecution Service”.

Police said that charges under consideration include corporate manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter, misconduct in public office, fraud, and health and safety matters.

On the Met’s announced timeline, charging decisions *might* therefore be reached before the ten-year anniversary on June 14, 2027, with criminal trials, if they happen at all, unlikely to begin before 2029. By the time any verdicts are delivered, Grenfell will be a crime approaching two decades old.

The Grenfell inferno was a crime of capitalism and social murder. The Met’s latest statement is part of an orchestrated state cover-up that has continued under four Conservative and Labour governments, led by four different prime ministers.

At Tuesday’s press conference, the Metropolitan Police spoke of the “immense” scale of their nine-year investigation. Its “update” boasted of having investigated:

- 15,000 individuals and 700 organisations... of which 57 people and 20 organisations are suspects for criminal offences.
- 165 million electronic files to meticulously search for evidence.
- A total of 14,400 statements have been taken.
  - More than 27,000 exhibits, including cladding, insulation, doors, windows and other parts of the building, down to screws, nuts and bolts, are stored in a warehouse.
  - So far, 15 of 20 files have been submitted to the CPS and 10 of 14 overarching evidence files are complete.

- The word counts of the Met’s summary reports to the CPS exceeds 2.2 million.

The Met’s recycled lists seek to justify nine years of inaction. It has refused to charge those responsible for heinous crimes that sacrificed the lives of Grenfell residents to corporate greed and profit.

Announcing that a replica model of Grenfell will be used at any future trial, the Met explained, “[T]he replica will bring to life how elements of the building looked before, during and after its refurbishment for jurors in a way a drawing or 3D rendering cannot.”

Garry Moncrieff, the Met’s lead investigator on the Grenfell fire, told the press the investigation had cost £150.6 million so far, while Deputy Assistant Commissioner Kevin Southworth said the replica tower would cost about £2 million.

Southworth made clear, however, that the replica’s construction for a possible future trial, “in no way presumes charges will be brought, which is entirely a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service”.

In the years since the fire, everything in the world has been done by the Met except the one thing that was necessary: walking up to the front door of those guilty in corporate and political circles, placing them under arrest and prosecuting them.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) warned from the outset that the state would launch a cover-up as grotesque as that perpetrated over the 97 deaths at Hillsborough football stadium in 1989, for which no one was ever brought to justice.

Both the Grenfell inquiry and the glacial police investigation were, the SEP warned, integral parts of a state operation to deflect mass anger and protect the guilty.

Nothing in law prevented the Met from making arrests and charging those guilty within days of the fire, meaning they would have been in prison years ago.

Nine days after the fire, on June 23, 2017, Detective

Superintendent Fiona McCormack told reporters that preliminary police tests of “insulation samples collected from Grenfell Tower” had already shown the cladding insulation “combusted soon after the test started” and that “the initial tests on equivalent aluminium composite tiles failed the safety tests.”

She stated: “We are looking at every criminal offence from manslaughter onwards... every health and safety and fire safety offence, and we are reviewing every company involved in the building and refurbishment of Grenfell Tower.”

Those involved in the building and refurbishment had their names on the contracts. Their directors were on the company registers.

Six weeks after the fire, the Met wrote to survivors that there were “reasonable grounds” to suspect that the Conservative-run Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and its Tenant Management Organisation had committed corporate manslaughter. “Reasonable grounds to suspect” is the precise definition and the legal threshold required under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to make an arrest.

The only facts needed were that 71 people were dead (the 72nd victim, Maria del Pilar Burton, died seven months after being rescued from her 19th-floor flat). The cladding had failed every safety test. Named organisations were formally identified as corporate manslaughter suspects. The contracts, procurement decisions, and sign-off documents identifying the individual directors who approved the use of that cladding were seized by police early in the investigation—by their own account.

The police argued that corporate manslaughter applies to organisations, not individuals, and that identifying personal criminal liability for gross negligence manslaughter requires establishing exactly which director made which decision.

But all this information was in the hands of the police within months of the fire.

This is why the Tory government moved rapidly to set up a public inquiry, backed by the opposition Labour Party, led then by Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn championed the public inquiry, knowing that its terms of reference would be governed by Labour’s 2005 Inquiries Act and would therefore be powerless to lay criminal charges. Tory Prime Minister Theresa May and the inquiry chair—establishment stooge Sir Martin Moore-Bick—agreed a stipulation that the proceedings would not investigate any issues of a “social, economic and political nature”.

The inquiry ran for over seven years, from September 2017 to February 2025, finally issuing a 1,700-page whitewash. It delivered, as the *World Socialist Web Site*

reported, “a few slapped wrists to the companies involved,” with toothless admonitions for “decades of failure” over public buildings being clad in flammable material.

Moncrieff told Tuesday’s press conference, “The carousel of blame, or the web of blame, as the [public] inquiry referred to it, has been a challenge for the investigation. It’s one of the reasons that it’s taken us such a period of time to be able to decipher that and untangle effectively.”

But the Met has been central to this “entanglement” aimed at protecting the guilty. Virtually from the outset, the Met ensured there would be no arrests resulting in prosecutions. In December 2018, already 18 months after the fire, Met Commissioner Cressida Dick said the police investigation would take “years, not months”.

In March 2019, the Met announced it would not seek charges until the inquiry had published its final report. Charges could not even be considered until “the latter part of 2021”—nearly four and a half years after the fire—until the inquiry’s final report could be read in full. Another six years of delay have followed.

The police have spent more than £150 million of taxpayers’ money on its investigation, including several million on a Grenfell Tower replica, supposedly so that a jury, if anyone is ever brought to trial, can get an idea of what the tower—now being dismantled—looked like before the fire.

But everyone knows what it looked like; moreover, its residents knew it was turned into a death trap by a cost-cutting “refurbishment”. This was a cut-price prettifying of the tower so that rich people in the affluent parts of Kensington would not have to view an “eyesore” if they looked in the direction of the northern end of the borough, where Grenfell was located.

The Socialist Equality Party and the WSWS called for immediate criminal prosecutions from the outset. The guilty were always known. We named as those who should face charges: former RBKC council leader Nicholas Paget-Brown; his deputy Rock Feilding-Mellen; TMO head Robert Black; executives at the companies involved in the refurbishment: Rydon, Harley Facades, Arconic, Kingspan and Celotex; and political figures including Boris Johnson (who slashed fire service budgets as London Mayor); and Prime Ministers May, Cameron, Brown and Blair, whose governments gutted building regulations and public spending.



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