

London residents on the Grenfell fire: “All they want to do is maximise their profits”

By our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters recently spoke to London residents on Bramley Road, near the burned out Grenfell Tower.

Asked what he thought of the fire and the policies of the Conservative-run Kensington and Chelsea council that allowed Grenfell Tower to become a death trap, **Hasandu** said, “It was awful. Absolutely awful. They never thought about the safety of the residents.”

Speaking about the corporations who installed flammable cladding on the tower, which was the main element in the rapid spread of the fire, he added, “All they want to do is maximise their profits. That’s all. Like I said, it’s all for the upper class. And then nothing for the people, who have been shoved into places like this.”

“It’s just not fair. You know if you’re working class, it doesn’t mean that you’re not part of society. Everyone’s equal. It doesn’t matter how much you earn or where you live. Everyone has a right to live safely.”

Asked his view on the police statement that the final death toll will not be known until next year, he said, “That’s awful, it should be now. If it was a terrorist attack we would have got one straight away.”

Fara works in the nearby neighbourhood of Ladbroke Grove. **Bea**, her friend was visiting her. Fara said, “My friend and I were on a day out and she wanted to see it [Grenfell Tower] so we decided to walk down this way and see it with our own eyes. You see how big it is compared to what people read in the media.”

Last Thursday, the Kensington and Chelsea council barred residents and the media from attending their first meeting to be held since the June 14 fire. Asked her view of the council, Fara said, “They’re quite indifferent. They don’t seem very involved. I read in

the paper that they had a meeting behind closed doors, or they didn’t want the media there apparently.”

Bea said, “This event has taken place in London, in a wealthy borough that has all the resources, all the services. If this was happening in a third world country the services would have been mobilised much better--it would be better organised, coordinated. What is the excuse? If you can’t do it in a city that has everything at its disposal, what are you going to do on a bigger scale?”

Asked why she thought the council responded with contempt and indifference to the residents of Grenfell Tower and the survivors, Bea said, “I think given the location, the make-up of the area... We’ve highlighted the wealthy side, people with money: they dictate whose needs are met or prioritized.”

Fara agreed saying, “The council deal more with applications for rich people wanting to dig into their basement and make another room, rather than what this section of North Kensington needs.”

On the basic lack of fire safety measures in Grenfell Tower, Bea said, “If you look at it, 20 odd floors, they were expecting so many families to evacuate through one staircase. Is that realistic, really? Is that sufficient?”

Asked her thoughts on the government’s public inquiry, Bea said, “I think the inquiry is a step forward, but it has its drawbacks. Just look at Hillsborough [the football stadium disaster where 96 Liverpool football supporters were crushed to death in 1989]. It took them what, 25, 26 years, and they’ve got people charged now. But they’ve only been charged. Now they have to go through the process of convicting them... So these people [Grenfell residents] could wait another 20-30 years before they get answers.”

Madison and Lisa are students from the United

States who are making a documentary about the Grenfell Tower fire.

Lisa said, “We are studying abroad here and we saw the news the day after it happened. We realised that a lot of the stories that are coming out haven’t focused on people’s individual opinions who live here. So we’ve come over here to look for anyone involved, and we’re trying to make a documentary that instead of speaking about the people, they can speak through us.”

Asked what they intended to focus on, Madison said, “We want to help make sense of things, the class-ism that exists. This wouldn’t have happened if it were a rich area.”

Lisa and Madison were aware of the situation in Flint, Michigan in the US, where thousands of people have been poisoned due to a decision by the corporate and political elite to make money off of the water supply.

Lisa said, “I was actually listening to a story [on Flint] before I came over and there was a woman with a family who did a lot of research and she was one of the first people who started collecting evidence and campaigning. And when she presented it to the town hall, to the local officials, they told her that wasn’t true. They denied it up until they couldn’t deny it any more. I think that’s a big issue here too, that a lot of this has come from denial. What we’ve heard from people that we’ve interviewed is that there were concerns about fire safety raised for over a year and there were no responses, there was just denial.”

Describing what London residents told them, Madison said one had told them how “she has been asking everyone--the fire department, the council, the police--how long did they have, according to that safety information, to evacuate the tower? And no one has answered her. Everyone has told her ‘no comment, we don’t want to answer.’ Some people have pretended they don’t know what she’s saying. So a lot of good questions have been raised by the people themselves and hopefully they’ll be answered.”

Asked what she thought about the parallels with the Hillsborough deaths, and the decades long struggle by the families of the victims for justice, Madison said, “If there’s enough coverage of the people’s opinions and the facts, hopefully if that awareness is brought to enough people in the world, then it won’t take 28 years to get justice.”

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