

Socialist Equality Party (UK) members threatened and excluded from Grenfell Tower fundraiser

By our reporters
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On Saturday, members of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) were barred from a fundraising event for the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire, which was being held in a public area, Emslie Horniman Pleasance Park, near the burnt-out tower. They were intimidated and threatened with arrest by security guards and local council representatives.

On entering the event, SEP campaigners asked the event organisers if they could distribute leaflets in the park, featuring an article from the *World Socialist Web Site* detailing opposition from local residents and survivors to the failure of the Metropolitan Police to arrest those responsible after a four-week investigation. After reading the article, “Anger grows over failure to prosecute those responsible for Grenfell Tower inferno”, the organisers asked the four campaigners to move outside the park’s perimeter, which the campaigners did.

About 30 minutes later, the SEP members were confronted by two security guards who demanded they move off the public pavement outside the park and stop distributing articles or speaking to members of the public attending the event.

When the SEP members demanded to know on what authority the security guards were seeking to remove them from a public space, several event organisers, security guards and representatives from the local council threateningly surrounded the campaign team. A female council representative declared that it was “inappropriate” to be circulating the leaflet and threatened to call the police, claiming that the reporters were “harassing the event organisers.”

Using increasingly provocative and intimidating language, security guards and another event

organiser—who called herself Helen and identified herself as a Labour Party delegate and prospective candidate in next year’s local council elections—escorted the campaign team away from the park entrance, again threatened to call the police and alleged that SEP members were causing a “public disorder.”

Questioned again as to the basis for the harassment of the SEP members, one of the organisers said they had a Temporary Event Notice from the council for the event. When asked for some form of reference for this notice, the organiser refused to provide it, despite the fact that it is a legal requirement to display a copy of the Temporary Event Notice, as explained on the gov.uk web site.

In effect, the SEP members were being told that the license from the council, which conveys only personal rights rather than any rights attaching to the land itself such as easements (legal rights of way), had supposedly given the organisers the right to marshal the surrounding public areas of the park, including the public footpath.

The SEP campaigners were then told by one of the security volunteers that they had on three occasions breached Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 by asking such questions and by handing out leaflets and speaking to people. A breach is defined as the use of threatening words or behaviour, disorderly behaviour or the display of any representation that is threatening or abusive.

All the questions posed by the SEP members were carried out in a calm and responsible manner. At no time did anyone attending the event complain about the SEP’s presence, and all discussion was of a friendly

and respectful character. The SEP has sent a written objection to the local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>