

UK: Thirteen months after Grenfell fire, police conduct just three interviews

By Alice Summers
25 July 2018

After 13 months of investigation, the Metropolitan Police announced last week that they have carried out a grand total of three interviews under caution in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire last June. The inferno killed 72 men, women and children, with hundreds more made homeless by the blaze.

In a statement, the Met Police announced that these interviews, which have been carried out since late June, mark a “new phase” in their investigation into the inferno. More interviews were “likely” to be conducted in the coming weeks and months, they declared.

According to the police statement, offences being considered include gross negligence manslaughter, corporate manslaughter and breaches of the Health and Safety Act.

The Met said that the remains of Grenfell Tower will soon be handed over to the local Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) council, as the police forensic work on the building nears completion. What will become of the tower once the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council retake control of it in August is unclear.

The fact that more than a year after the fire only three interviews have been conducted is a devastating indictment of the investigation. The entire criminal investigation is a fraud, with the police dragging the investigation out and refusing to issue any substantive details, on the basis that to do so would be *sub judice*.

No details have been disclosed as to the identities of those interviewed by the police, or even whether the three interviews have been conducted with three separate suspects, or whether the same individual has been interviewed on multiple occasions.

It remains unclear if this person or these people questioned hold positions of responsibility in the RBKC, in the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) that ran the building on behalf of

RBKC, or in companies such as Rydon and Harley Facades, which oversaw and installed the flammable cladding resulting in the rapid spread of a small fire on Grenfell’s fourth floor.

No specific information about what these individuals are being questioned in relation to has even been released.

According to housing magazine *Inside Housing*, when asked whether more information about the police interviews would be made public, a police spokesperson made it clear that no details about the interviews will be made available and the public will be kept as little informed as possible.

“We will not be providing details of the interviews that have been carried out or a running tally of the numbers of interviews completed,” the spokesperson said.

“Updates will be given at points when we are confident the families affected have been informed and we have a significant update. Nothing should be read into the numbers of interviews, nor the order in which they are conducted.”

This new stage in the police investigation is part of the state cover-up of the events and decisions that led to the fire. The investigation and parallel public inquiry, led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, are not aimed at revealing the truth, but concealing it. They do not intend to hold the guilty to account, but to protect the criminals in central and local government and the corporate entities who signed off on the “refurbishment” of Grenfell that turned a relatively safe concrete structure into a death trap.

More than a year after the inferno, no arrests have been made, let alone charges laid against any individual or company for the social murder of 72 people. Details of the investigation are being deliberately obscured and the criminal parties protected.

That the police are only now beginning to interview suspects in relation to the fire—and the absence of arrests of those guilty of mass murder—is in sharp contrast to the

fact that the same police team have lost no time in prosecuting a handful of people making fraudulent claims related to the Grenfell fire. Enormous social crimes have been committed by individuals within the political and corporate elite who have the blood of 72 people on their hands, and those jailed so far—six people for a total of 14.5 years—have committed minor crimes in comparison.

On July 13, two Jamaican migrants were each sentenced to three years in jail for fraudulently claiming to be survivors of the fire and receiving around £125,000 in relief money destined for former Grenfell residents. The couple, who had no fixed address or legal immigration status, are among around 10 individuals who have been arrested on suspicion on fraud.

At the start of June, police also opened an investigation into the London Fire Brigade (LFB) for the “stay put” strategy it implemented during the Grenfell fire. Not a word was said about the fact that the advice—which has generally been sound in high-rises up until the Grenfell fire—proved so disastrous because of what the counsel for the Fire Brigades Union described as “multiple” safety failings that meant the building was a “highly combustible death trap.”

This was made clear by other recent fires in London where the high-rises were not clad in flammable material, such as last Friday’s tower block fire in Edmonton, north London, and one a few weeks ago at Whitstable House, which is located only yards from Grenfell tower. The fire at the Edmonton block, as with Whitstable, was brought under control within less than two hours and without a single fatality.

That the police laid out the possible offences of “gross negligence manslaughter, corporate manslaughter and breaches of the Health and Safety Act” also points to a future whitewash.

If charges of corporate manslaughter are brought under the 2007 Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act, this means that no *individuals* responsible will be brought to justice. The Act stipulates that only corporations as an entity can be found guilty of such a charge, not those leading the companies. The most that will happen, if the council and/or KCTMO are found guilty of corporate manslaughter, is that they will receive a fine and carry on with business as usual. As public entities, the taxpayers will foot the bill.

Although the Common Law offence of gross negligence manslaughter—under which those convicted can go to prison—is reportedly being considered, in reality next to no corporations are ever found guilty of either offence

and charges of gross negligence manslaughter against an individual director of a business are often dropped.

Two academics who have studied the impact of the Act, Professors Steve Tombs and David Whyte, wrote in July last year: “In five of the 21 convictions under the [2007] Act so far, the prosecution was accompanied by or as a result of charges of gross negligence manslaughter being dropped against an individual company director and then a guilty plea being entered for the company.”

Those guilty of social murder at Grenfell Tower must be arrested and charged, including former London Mayor Boris Johnson, Prime Minister Theresa May and her predecessors, David Cameron, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair.

Those who were instrumental in the decision to add the cladding to Grenfell must also be arrested and charged, including former Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council leader Nicholas Paget-Brown; his then-deputy, Rock Feilding-Mellen, the former head of the council’s housing management organisation; the CEO of Rydon, Robert Bond; and the managing director of Harley Facades, Ray Bailey.

- Justice for Grenfell means no cover-up and no inquiry whitewash!
- Arrest the political and corporate criminals responsible!
- Stop the scapegoating of firefighters!
- Quality public housing is a social right!
- For an emergency multibillion-pound programme of public works to build schools, hospitals, public housing and all the infrastructure required in the 21st century!

The Grenfell Fire Forum, initiated by the Socialist Equality Party, will be discussing these issues and those around the Whitstable and Grenfell fires at its next meeting on Saturday, July 28, at the Maxilla Social Club in North Kensington, London. All are welcome to attend.

Grenfell Fire Forum meeting

Saturday, July 28, 4 p.m.

Maxilla Social Club, 2 Maxilla Walk

London, W10 6SW (nearest tube: Latimer Road)

For further details visit [facebook.com/Grenfellforum](https://www.facebook.com/Grenfellforum)

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>