

Further evidence of official criminality surfaces as Grenfell fire inquiry resumes

By Robert Stevens
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The Grenfell fire inquiry resumes next week after its summer recess, with further evidence surfacing of the criminality of those who ignored warnings that the tower was a death trap.

The inquiry will not bring justice. It is the creature of the Conservative government and, under the provisions of the 2005 Inquiries Act, has no powers to prosecute anyone. Its fraudulent character was epitomised by chairman Sir Moore-Bick's insistence that issues of a "social, economic and political nature" will not feature in its deliberations.

Issues that have emerged during the recess include the revelations this month by ITV News that it has seen documents proving official warnings about fire safety at Grenfell Tower were ignored just months before the June 14, 2017 fire that resulted in the horrifying deaths of 72 men, women and children.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council (RBKC) and the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO), which managed the building on its behalf, were served a fire deficiency notice from the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) in November 2016. They were also given, months earlier, a deficiency notice from an independent Fire Risk Assessment that flagged up multiple failures at Grenfell, requiring urgent action by the KCTMO.

ITV reported that the fire safety audits revealed "problems with damaged or poorly fitted fire doors, fire doors that didn't self-close, and raised questions about how the refurbishment had affected the operation of the building's smoke venting system and the fire-fighter's lift controls."

The "warnings from the independent assessor were issued in June 2016, one year before the fire, with deadlines for action," reported ITV. The assessor, as part of a routine inspection during the buildings

refurbishment, recommended that action be taken to remedy more than 40 "high risk" issues at Grenfell Tower within two to three weeks.

Nothing was done by the KCTMO on more than half of the issues identified, with ITV reporting, "In October [2016], the fire risk assessor wrote to the KCTMO asking why action still hadn't been taken on more than 20 issues he had identified in his June report."

LFEPA's fire deficiency notice was dated November 2016, with a deadline for remedial work to be finished by May 2017—just one month before the fire.

This evidence reveals a criminal level of indifference towards the basic safety of residents in a tower block able to house around 600 people.

The broadcaster points out that "based on inspections of the building after the fire by experts for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, there appears to be no evidence action was taken on many of the failings."

Sandra Ruiz, the aunt of 12-year-old Jessica Ramirez, who died in the fire, told ITV, "It makes me really angry that somebody would have received that information and didn't act on it."

The issues cited in the fire audits have already been identified by Dr. Barbara Lane at the public inquiry. Lane was tasked with informing the inquiry as to why a small kitchen fire on the fourth floor of Grenfell was able to spread in a matter of minutes to engulf the entire 24-storey building, leaving many with no chance of escape.

The authorities didn't act on the reports then and refuse to take any responsibility now. In response to ITV's report, RBKC passed the buck to the public inquiry and the police investigation, knowing that they will do nothing. "This will be a matter for the public inquiry and to comment further could risk prejudicing the police investigation," said RBKC. Neither the public inquiry nor Metropolitan Police investigation into the fire made any

statement.

Nothing has been done to apprehend those responsible for the social murder committed by the authorities at Grenfell. The level of inaction is staggering. In nearly 15 months not a single person has been charged or even arrested. Since announcing in July that all they have done is to complete three interviews in relation to Grenfell, the police have said nothing more.

Many families made homeless by the fire have *still* not been rehoused. As of August 16, of the 204 households who lived in the tower, 53 households were still in emergency accommodation, 41 were in temporary accommodation, while 110 have moved into permanent accommodation. Of 129 households evacuated from the wider area, eight were in emergency accommodation, 74 in temporary accommodation and just one household moved into permanent accommodation.

Thousands of other public buildings around the UK are clad in flammable material of the type that resulted in the Grenfell fire becoming an uncontrollable inferno. Almost nothing is being done to make any of these structures safe. This led the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the UK's human rights watchdog human rights, to declare the government in breach of its duty to protect lives under Article 2 of the European convention on human rights and schedule 1 to the Human Rights Act 1998.

It warns, "Combustible cladding is still present in many other buildings as well, including schools, leisure centres and hospitals... Estimates of the number of buildings affected run into the thousands, with the estimated costs of replacing combustible materials running into many millions of pounds. All those costs stem from the state's failure to provide a building construction and fire safety system that is fit for purpose."

The only thing the ruling elite *is* doing is developing a carefully-orchestrated campaign, led by the Royal Family, to present a picture of everyone working in common purpose for the Grenfell community. The day after the Inquiry resumes, the BBC will screen an episode of its *DIY SOS* series that will feature Prince William chipping in to help construct a new building for the Dale Youth Boxing Club that was previously located in Grenfell Tower.

This is nauseating. William and his family have nothing in common with those being patronised with such stunts. A hard hat and high visibility vest cannot disguise the fact that he is a representative of the same British state responsible for the Grenfell atrocity. He resides just two

miles from the burnt-out husk, but he may as well live on another planet.

Worth tens of millions of pounds, this privileged scion of the aristocracy lives in Kensington Palace. Thirteen other Royal parasites, including Prince Harry and Megan Markle, live in the same splendour.

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 instrumental in the decision to add the cladding to Grenfell must also be arrested and charged.

We demand:

- 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 at its next meeting on Saturday, September 1, at the Maxilla Social Club in North Kensington, London. All are welcome to attend.

Grenfell Fire Forum meeting

Saturday, September 1, 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 WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>