



Grenfell Tower Inquiry Debate on 31 October 2019

On 31 October 2019, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) is due to move that “this House takes note of the phase one report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry”.

Summary

- On 14 June 2017, a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey residential housing building of 129 flats in North Kensington, London. The fire is believed to have started in a kitchen in a property on the fourth floor, before spreading upwards along the external cladding of the building.
- Grenfell Tower had a ‘stay put’ fire policy. The building was designed to contain a fire in a single flat until fire crews could reach it. During the fire, residents were told to remain in their flats by the emergency services.
- 65 people were rescued from Grenfell Tower by firefighters either from their flats or while evacuating. 72 people died as a result of the fire.
- The following day, the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced a public inquiry examining the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the Grenfell Tower fire. On 28 June 2017, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a retired judge, was appointed by Mrs May as the chairman of the inquiry.
- On 15 August 2017, Theresa May formally set up the inquiry and the terms of reference were set following a public consultation led by Sir Martin. The inquiry was formally opened on 14 September 2017, with Sir Martin setting out a list of issues to be investigated. This included the original design and construction of Grenfell Tower in 1974 and subsequent modifications to it.
- The inquiry has been split into two phases. Phase one examined what happened during the night of the fire. Phase two will focus on establishing how the condition of Grenfell Tower allowed the disaster to happen.
- During the Grenfell Inquiry, expert witnesses attributed the disaster to several factors. According to Luke Bisby, Chair of Fire and Structures at the University of Edinburgh’s School of Engineering, combustible materials used in the refurbishment of the building’s windows were a factor in allowing the fire to spread. Additionally, the inquiry heard from Dr Barbara Lane, a fire safety engineer, that the building’s smoke extraction system was not working at the time of the fire.
- The report for phase one of the inquiry is set to be published on 30 October 2019.
- The hearings for the second phase are expected to begin in January 2020. In May 2019, following calls from Grenfell survivors to increase the oversight of the inquiry, Theresa May appointed two new panel members for phase two of the inquiry.

Eren Waitzman | 25 October 2019

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Further Information

- Grenfell Tower Inquiry, [Updated List of Issues](#), September 2019

Document outlining what the inquiry would be examining in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire, such as the construction of the building and the fire and safety measures within the building at the time of the fire.

- Grenfell Tower Inquiry, [Sir Martin's Letter Containing His Recommendation on the Terms of Reference](#), 10 August 2017; and Prime Minister's Office, [The Prime Minister's Response](#), 15 August 2017

Letter from Sir Martin to the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, detailing his recommendations for the terms of reference for the Grenfell Inquiry, which includes a summary of responses to the public consultation on the terms of reference; and Mrs May's response accepting the recommendations.

- INQUEST, [Family Reflections on Grenfell: No Voice Left Unheard](#), May 2019, pp 5–8

Executive summary from a report by INQUEST, a charity which provides expertise on state-related deaths and their investigations, on behalf of the families of the victims of the Grenfell Tower fire. It notes that families of the victims of the fire were critical that phase one of the Grenfell Inquiry did not appoint a "diverse independent decision-making panel" at its inception.

- Prime Minister's Office, [Statement from the Prime Minister on Grenfell Tower](#), 17 June 2017

Press release following Theresa May's meeting with survivors and families of the victims of the fire.

Parliamentary Debate, Statements and Questions

- [Debate on the 'Grenfell Tower Fire'](#), HC Hansard, 6 June 2019, cols 291–333
- [Debate on the 'Grenfell Tower Inquiry'](#), HC Hansard, 14 May 2018, cols 2–48WH
- House of Commons, [Written Statement: Grenfell Tower Inquiry Terms of Reference](#), 14 September 2017, HCWS135
- [Statement by the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, on 'Grenfell Tower'](#), HC Hansard, 22 June 2017, cols 166–94

Press Articles and Comment

- Robert Booth, ['Grenfell Tower Report to Be Released a Day Before Brexit Deadline'](#), *Guardian*, 4 October 2019
- INQUEST, ['Grenfell Families Express Frustration and Anger and Urge Government and Inquiry Team to Listen to Their Voices'](#), 8 May 2019
- Amelia Gentleman, ['People Have Been So Strong': How Grenfell United is Fighting For Justice](#), *Guardian*, 25 January 2018