



This trapped man waving a makeshift flag was rescued by fire fighters.



"Within an hour the whole place went up," witness Cornelius Vitalis tells WHO.

FUELLING THE FIRE?
Some experts believe the fire spread so quickly due to the external cladding. Two British ministers have said that the cladding, installed last year, was not in accordance with UK building regulations. "This flammable cladding, which is banned in Europe and the US, is also banned here," said Chancellor Phillip Hammond.



A gutted apartment inside the Grenfell Tower.

GRENFELL TOWER TRAGEDY

VOICES FROM THE INFERNO

Survivors and witnesses share their harrowing stories as anger overwhelms the English capital

Around 12.45 AM on June 14, Grenfell Tower resident John Beadle had just said goodbye to a visiting friend when she suddenly returned in a panic. Beadle's friend also lived in the 24-storey council apartment block in North Kensington, London, and having attempted to take the stairs to her flat, "she ran back saying, 'I can't go home. There's too much smoke,'" Beadle, whose apartment is on the fourth floor, tells WHO. "So I went out to see what was happening and saw a guy on the phone saying, 'There's a fire in my house—a fridge fire.'"

That modest blaze apparently marked the beginning of a nightmare. In an appalling tragedy that sent shockwaves of grief and anger throughout the world, at least 79 people are dead or presumed dead and more than 70 injured in an inferno that raged in Grenfell Tower until dawn and beyond. While those missing are now presumed dead, Londoner Sawsan Choucair, 43, who has six loved ones unaccounted for at press time, is clinging to hope. "There's so much confusion in the hospitals that we don't know who's alive and who is dead," she tells WHO. "I'm just praying that I will find them."

The disaster has brought tensions to the boil in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where angry locals stormed Kensington Town Hall on June 17 demanding to know how such a tragedy could occur within the UK's richest locality. The 1974-built government-owned residential tower, which houses mainly working-class and ethnic minorities, had no fire sprinkler system and

only one flight of fire stairs for the 120 apartments. A recent refurbishment of the building included adding a reportedly cheap exterior cladding, which some experts believe may have enabled the fire to spread so rapidly from floor to floor (buildings are designed for fires to be contained to the area of origin and residents instructed to stay in their rooms). "We need to know what happened," said embattled UK Prime Minister Theresa May, who has announced a public inquiry. "We owe that to the families, to the people who have lost loved ones and the homes in which they lived."

"We saw people burning to death"
—witness Amina

John Beadle, 50, lived in an apartment on the fourth floor (it is the home of his sister, who is living in Cyprus).

A friend was with me and was about to go home—she lives the next floor up. As she was about to walk out the door at about a quarter to one, there was loads of smoke on the landing. [After Beadle learnt that his neighbour reported a fridge fire in his flat, Beadle thought the fire was being dealt with and returned home.] Maybe 20 minutes later I went back to the door to see what was happening and a fireman was there. It wasn't until about another 20 minutes later when everyone was shouting up at the window, "Get out! Evacuate, evacuate!"

Local resident Amina, who did not want WHO to publish her surname, was on the street as the fire took hold.

I was right next to the tower, just as the flames were starting to go up the side. I saw the people in the building. The flames were on the side,



Friends of missing 12-year-old Jessica Urbano embrace at the site of the tragedy.

and we were trying to get people to jump out. A lot of men [who live in the tower] came back from the prayer mosque [the building was home to a large Muslim community]. They had left their children and their wives at home but they couldn't get into the building because of the flames and smoke. They tried to rescue people but were blocked. One of them did get in. He never came back.

Father-of-one Oluwaseun Talabi, who lives with his partner and daughter on the 14th floor, told Channel 5's 5 News how he planned a daring escape out the window.

As soon as we opened the door [to the flat], all I could see was the smoke so we ran back in. I went to the kitchen, and I could see the other side of the kitchen burning, from the roof, so I started to get a bit more

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AUSTRALSCOPE; AAP IMAGE; GETTY IMAGES (2); AAP IMAGE

It is believed the two figures at the window are the sister and brother-in-law of Sawsan Choucair (right).



'JUST GO!'

London resident Sawsan Choucair is missing six members of her family, including her sister Nadia and Nadia's three children. Police announced on June 19 that those Grenfell residents missing are now presumed dead. During the inferno, Sawsan's friend talked on the phone to Nadia, who was with her family on the 21st floor. "My friend told my sister, 'Escape. Just go. Run through the stairs. Just get out through the stairs. That's the only way out. Get out. Now!'" Choucair tells WHO. At press time they had not been heard from.

scared. I took about 14 bed sheets, tied them together, tied it around the window, and I actually went through the window and I told my girlfriend to pass my daughter to me. But my daughter wouldn't come 'cause she was so scared of the height. Then the fire brigade came ... and told us to run out. I took a cloth, I tied my daughter behind on my back. Then we ran.

Sawsan Choucair, who lives nearby, rushed to the site when she heard of the fire. The 43-year-old's sister, Nadia Choucair, 30, lives in the block with husband Bassem and their three children, aged 14, 11 and 3. Choucair's 60-year-old mother is a resident there.

I was phoning my sister, my brother-in-law ... everyone, just trying to get through. Just shaking. I got a phone call from my friend in the building, saying, "Please help me." She was on the 21st floor. She just grabbed a blanket and ran down the stairs. She said to me, "I couldn't see anything. It was so smoky. I was stepping on bodies." She just kept going down until she got to the bottom. Twenty-one flights is a long way."

Beadle I got out as quick as I could. I evacuated at about half past one and it was burning up the side of the building. All the cladding was falling down everywhere, on fire. I've got four people dead in there who are my friends.

Amina We saw the flames and people literally burning to death. And children putting their hands up against the windows and screaming for help. We didn't sleep for two days. I saw someone jump from one flat to another [through a window] and they got all of their family out.

Talabi We managed to find the escape route, because everywhere is dark. I had my daughter on my back choking. I thought she was going to die. I thought I was going to die. I didn't think any of us were going to make it. When we got to the third floor we saw these firemen, so they grabbed [my daughter] off me and we ran out.

Choucair I'm missing six people: my mum, my sister, her kids, and her husband. I haven't heard anything from them at all. I'm just hoping and waiting. Hoping that they are in hospital.

Imad-Deen Zeggaf is a customer-service manager at the nearby West Way Sport and Fitness Centre, which is now housing some of the homeless survivors of the tragedy. Queen Elizabeth visited on June 16.

The survivors are sleeping inside on the tennis courts. We had a woman today crying when the Queen was there. She found out that she had lost her husband yesterday. Everybody is just depressed and shocked.

A friend of mine is still missing, he was on the 21st floor. A friend of mine spoke to him while the building was burning. He said that he was just crying. He just didn't know what to do.

I like helping people and putting a smile on people's faces and it's Ramadan, which is a time

where Muslims are supposed to be pushing themselves to get involved and helping others and providing them with food. You see how some of the media portrays Muslims, but this is the real face of Muslims.

Beadle I'm walking the streets. My whole life was in that building. I've lost everything. It's been more than a nightmare. My sister has lost her flat ... I've got nowhere to stay. I kipped at my mate's house the past couple of nights. I'll probably be under the flyover [overpass] tonight.

Fran Macaly, 24, lives in East London and has come daily to the site to help. A group of us said, "We have to act." There's no plan, there's

no structure, every day you take as it is. I suppose the message is just love one another. It's people from all over: different ages, different faces, different backgrounds. When the call is to love and the call is to help then it doesn't matter what colour you are, you just band together and do it.

■ Reported by Philip Boucher



A boy lights candles outside the Notting Hill Methodist Church on June 15.



Protestors walked through Kensington on June 16. "There's loads of anger," one local told WHO.



A wall of condolence has been erected at the Grenfell Tower site (on June 15).



Prince William consoled a woman.



Rita Ora

SHOWING SUPPORT

As beleaguered UK PM Theresa May was criticised in the press for not meeting affected residents, others were praised for their response. Prince William broke protocol to hug a woman whose husband was missing. Singer Adele came to the tower to offer support on the night of the tragedy. And Lily Allen and Rita Ora have been to the site in a show of support.



Adele



LONDON RALLIES

Since the tragedy, donations of food and clothing have poured into a makeshift support centre near the Grenfell Tower. On June 16 Queen Elizabeth visited a nearby sports centre, which has been converted to a shelter for those now homeless.



The Queen at the West Way sports centre on June 16.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AUSTRALSCOPE; SPLASH NEWS; GETTY IMAGES (2); MEGA AGENCY; FACEBOOK; GETTY IMAGES (3); AUSTRALSCOPE.