

Jeremy Corbyn writes to Theresa May to call for further action on Grenfell Inquiry

Following the publication of the Terms of Reference of the Grenfell Inquiry, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, has written to Theresa May calling for further action.

In the letter, Corbyn raises concerns about the “decision to exclude the broader social and political issues raised by the fire from the terms of reference of the inquiry.”

Focussing criticism on the Government, Corbyn says there is a fear that its “priority is to avoid criticism” for policy failures “rather than secure justice for Grenfell survivors.”

In order to learn the lessons of the Grenfell fire, Corbyn calls on May to “immediately set out a clear, independent and thorough process for identifying and addressing the broader failings that led to the Grenfell fire.”

Continuing his calls for the Inquiry terms to be broadened, Corbyn seeks guarantees that Sir Martin Moore-Bick’s assessors “will include people from minority backgrounds in order to introduce a broader range of experiences and perspectives into the inquiry, as many residents have demanded.”

Following Sir Martin Moore-Bick’s request that the Government reassure survivors on their immigration status, Corbyn also urges May to “grant indefinite right to remain in the UK to all survivors who need it, on a discretionary basis.”

Full text of the letter to Theresa May

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 15 August 2017 setting out the terms of reference for the inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower.

It is, of course, a relief that the inquiry is now up and running, and that survivors are one step closer to the answers they so desperately need.

However, I am deeply concerned by the decision to exclude the broader social and political issues raised by the fire from the terms of reference of the inquiry. The fire has raised profound concerns about the way that social housing is provided and managed in this country, and I – as well as many survivors – worry that, without a wider focus, the inquiry will fail to get fully to grips with the causes of the fire.

The fear is that the priority is to avoid criticism of your party's policy failures rather than secure justice for Grenfell survivors, along with the safety of the many other people who live in social housing in this country.

On the issue of social housing, your letter accepts that 'there are a number of concerns, that have gone unheard for too long.' However, you are vague on how these concerns will now be addressed. The promise that your Housing Minister, Alok Sharma, will meet and talk to social housing residents will be of little reassurance to such residents, particularly in light of the failure of Conservative Governments to implement the recommendations of the inquest into the 2009 fire at Lakanal House in Southwark.

Learning the lessons of the Grenfell fire will require more far-reaching action. I therefore ask that you immediately set out a clear, independent and thorough process for identifying and addressing the broader failings that led to the Grenfell fire.

This process should work closely with Sir Martin Moore-Bick's inquiry where appropriate and should include within its remit social housing policy and all aspects of the relationship between residents and the local authority and the tenant management organisation. Only by rooting out the more systemic failings that led to the Grenfell fire will we ensure that nothing like it ever happens again in this country.

I am also troubled by your response to Sir Martin's request that the Government take all possible measures to reassure survivors worried about their immigration status. You re-state the 12 month immigration amnesty already in place. However, it seems clear that Sir Martin is indicating a 12 month amnesty is insufficient and that concerns remain that a number of survivors will be discouraged from participating in the inquiry as a result.

I therefore urge you to grant indefinite right to remain in the UK to all survivors who need it, on a

discretionary basis. Failure to do so will impede their ability to contribute to the inquiry and may undermine the inquiry itself.

Finally, you note Sir Martin's intention to appoint a group of assessors with wide-ranging experience and expertise. But you do not specify the nature of this diversity beyond having experience in relation to the occupation and management of social housing, the administration of local government and "more technical matters." I continue to seek guarantees that Sir Martin's assessors will include people from minority backgrounds in order to introduce a broader range of experiences and perspectives into the inquiry, as many residents have demanded.

Given the significant public interest in the subject matter of this letter, I will be making it public.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Corbyn