# Grenfell: Uncovered reveals new depths of regulatory failure and government neglect



Olaide Sadiq's documentary *Grenfell: Uncovered* presents a heartwrenching and enraging exploration into the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London, a tragedy that claimed 72 lives. The film delves deeply into the circumstances that led to the disaster, providing a harrowing account through moving interviews with survivors and their families. Their testimonies reveal the catastrophic consequences of a lethal combination of incompetence, greed, and systemic failure. The documentary highlights how the London council, eager to improve the tower’s appearance and property values, chose to refurbish the brutalist concrete structure with the cheapest cladding available—flammable aluminium composite material (ACM). This choice, combined with governance and regulatory oversights, played a critical role in the disaster’s scale. Among the officials scrutinised in the film is Eric Pickles, the housing secretary at the time, whose dismissive attitude during the official inquiry remains emblematic of the wider arrogance and failure within government ranks.

The film portrays a stark timeline of neglect. It brings to light how warnings from previous fires, such as the 2009 Lakanal House fire, which also involved dangerous cladding and resulted in six deaths, were ignored by a government intent on deregulation and cutting through red tape. This negligence was compounded by the failure of London Fire Brigade’s senior officers to recognise the fire risk posed by the cladding, resulting in a tragic adherence to a “stay put” policy that may have cost lives. Firefighters displayed extraordinary courage, but the flawed management strategy sealed the fatal outcome. The documentary includes rare commentary from then-Prime Minister Theresa May, whose statement that “there was regulation there, it just wasn’t up to purpose” underscores the inadequacy of existing controls.

The broader investigation into the Grenfell tragedy, echoed in multiple detailed reports and inquiries, highlights failures stretching across government, industry, and regulatory bodies. The use of ACM cladding, supplied by a major aluminium firm’s French division, came despite internal research indicating its dangers. Several manufacturers, including Arconic, Celotex, and Kingspan, have been accused of misleading the public about their products' safety. The Building Research Establishment and fire safety inspectors such as Exova also faced intense scrutiny for lapses in their duties. A comprehensive final report described the disaster as the result of "decades of failure," pointing to systemic issues in regulation, construction practices, and corporate ethics. The UK government under David Cameron prioritised deregulation, fostering an environment where safety warnings were disregarded and companies were allowed to circumvent rigorous testing protocols that other countries enforced more strictly.

Despite the scale of the inquiry and evidence gathered, criminal charges and comprehensive legal accountability remain elusive, much to the frustration of survivors and campaigners. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has pledged to bar negligent companies from public contracts and explore criminal penalties for delays in replacing unsafe cladding. Efforts continue to identify and retrofit or remove dangerous cladding from numerous buildings across the UK, as the risk persists in other high-rises. The government’s recent decision to demolish the remains of Grenfell Tower has sparked mixed reactions. While the move is intended to address structural safety concerns and facilitate healing, some bereaved families wished to preserve the tower as a somber memorial to the lives lost. Material from the demolition will be repurposed into a new memorial, symbolising both remembrance and the ongoing need for justice.

*Grenfell: Uncovered* stands as a sobering reminder that the tragedy was not just a fire, but a catastrophic failure of political will, regulatory vigilance, and corporate responsibility. It underscores the urgent necessity for systemic reform and lasting accountability. For survivors and families, the struggle continues; for the public, the film issues a stark warning about the real human cost of regulatory negligence and political complacency.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/b27ed1aa-7c89-461e-8a80-c810da39bf03)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/b27ed1aa-7c89-461e-8a80-c810da39bf03)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/18b217c4-db74-4b1a-a11e-62889dee8eca), [[5]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/09/04/grenfell-tower-fire-final-report-delivers-damning-verdict_6724781_19.html), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/grenfell-tower-report-detail-what-led-deadly-2017-london-blaze-2024-09-03/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/18b217c4-db74-4b1a-a11e-62889dee8eca), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/5aebcfdd76bbd59a57f734aa012da248), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/grenfell-tower-report-detail-what-led-deadly-2017-london-blaze-2024-09-03/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/18b217c4-db74-4b1a-a11e-62889dee8eca), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/grenfell-tower-report-detail-what-led-deadly-2017-london-blaze-2024-09-03/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jun/20/grenfell-uncovered-review-heartwrenching-account-of-avoidable-tragedy> - This review discusses the documentary 'Grenfell: Uncovered,' directed by Olaide Sadiq, which examines the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in London that resulted in 72 deaths. The film delves into the causes of the tragedy, highlighting the use of highly flammable aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding during the tower's refurbishment. It features interviews with survivors and their families, shedding light on the systemic failures and negligence that led to the disaster. The review underscores the importance of holding those responsible accountable and the need for stringent regulations to prevent future tragedies.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/b27ed1aa-7c89-461e-8a80-c810da39bf03> - This Financial Times review of 'Grenfell: Uncovered' praises the documentary for its harrowing portrayal of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire. Directed by Olaide Sadiq, the film reconstructs the rapid spread of the fire, attributed to the building’s use of flammable cladding intended to visually upgrade it. The documentary incorporates distressing footage, including 999 calls and personal videos, to depict the overwhelming chaos and loss. It effectively unpacks the complex findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, highlighting political, institutional, and corporate negligence, with only former Prime Minister Theresa May providing commentary among officials.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/18b217c4-db74-4b1a-a11e-62889dee8eca> - This Financial Times article reports on the final report of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, attributing the disaster to 'decades of failure' by the UK government and the construction industry. The report criticises the housing department for ignoring safety warnings, prioritising deregulation, and allowing manufacturers to mislead about product safety. Companies like Arconic, Celotex, and Kingspan were denounced for deceptive practices. Local authorities, the Tenant Management Organisation, and the London Fire Brigade also faced scrutiny for their roles. Prime Minister Keir Starmer committed to barring implicated companies from public contracts and considering criminal penalties for slow cladding replacement.
5. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2024/09/04/grenfell-tower-fire-final-report-delivers-damning-verdict_6724781_19.html> - This article from Le Monde discusses the final report on the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, revealing severe failures and negligence in the building’s refurbishment and regulatory oversight. Essential conclusions include inappropriate use of highly flammable ACM cladding, negligence by the Ministry of Local Authorities, and regulatory circumvention by manufacturers and construction bodies. The Building Research Establishment failed to enforce fire safety rigorously. The report underscores the failure to heed warnings from past fire incidents and necessitates simplified responsibility chains and strict regulatory reforms. Efforts to retrofit buildings with safer cladding continue, but widespread incompetence persists in the construction sector.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/5aebcfdd76bbd59a57f734aa012da248> - This Associated Press article reports on the UK government's decision to demolish the remains of Grenfell Tower nearly eight years after the deadly fire that claimed 72 lives. The decision has faced criticism from some bereaved families who wished to preserve the building as a monument. However, the government cited structural safety concerns and the need for community healing in its decision to demolish the tower. Materials from the demolition will be used to create a memorial. The tower has become symbolic of government failures, corporate greed, and inequality, with a public inquiry revealing multiple systemic failures contributed to the tragedy.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/grenfell-tower-report-detail-what-led-deadly-2017-london-blaze-2024-09-03/> - This Reuters article reports on the final report of the public inquiry into the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, blaming the disaster on failings by the government, the construction industry, and particularly the companies involved in fitting the building with flammable cladding. The fire, which killed 72 people, was deemed avoidable. The inquiry criticised the firms for incompetence, dishonesty, and greed, particularly highlighting the roles of Studio E, Rydon, Harley, and fire safety inspectors Exova. The government and local authorities were also criticised for inaction and indifference towards fire safety regulations. Prime Minister Keir Starmer apologised to the victims' families, admitting governmental failure.