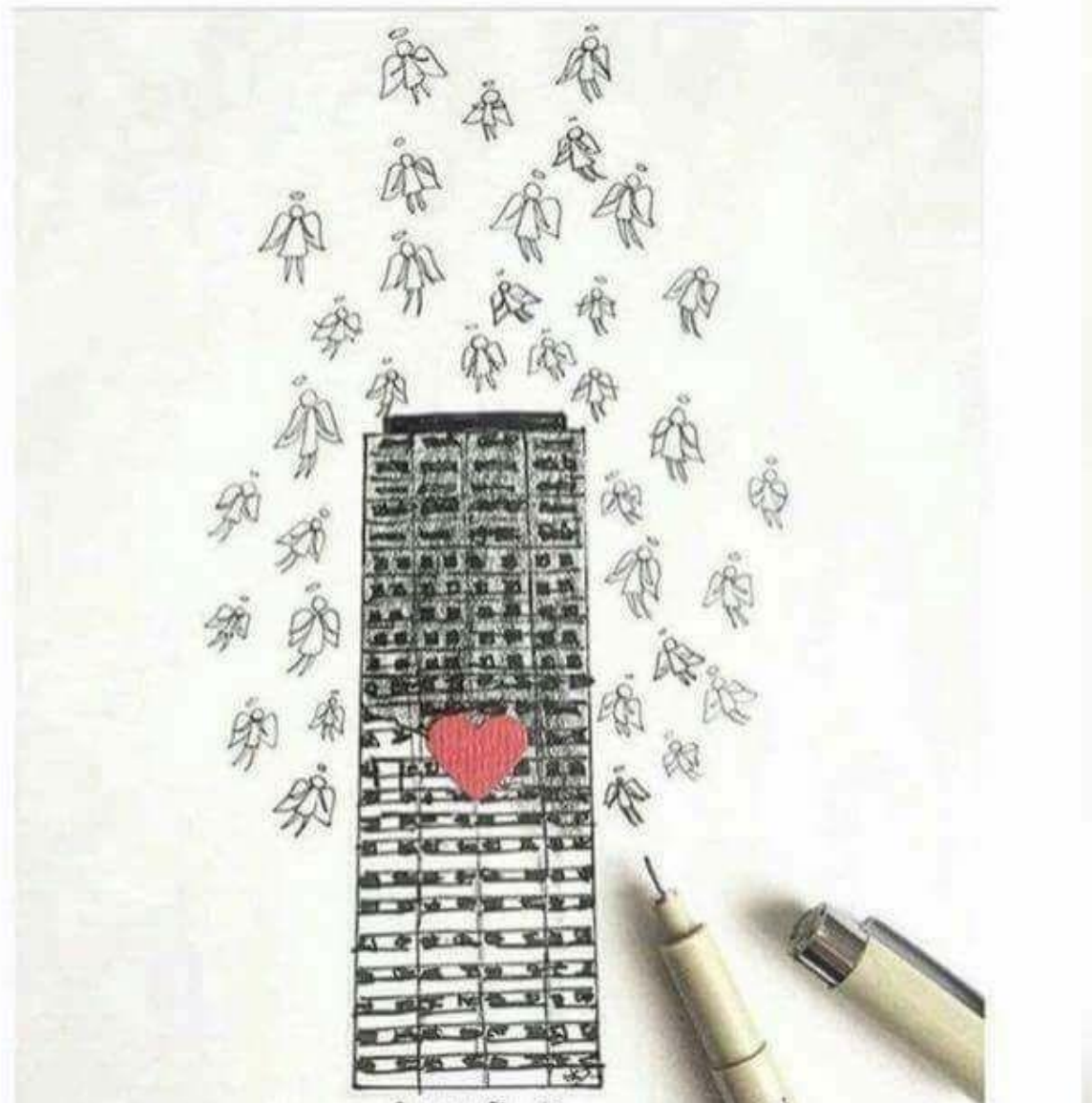




Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women's Centre



Annual Report 2017



Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

<https://quran.com/2/156>

Grenfell

The Grenfell tragedy has hit our community the hardest.

Our plan for the second half of the year at the centre was thrown into turmoil as we had to cater for the immediate needs of our community. We decided from early on that we will not engage in the culture blame that has taken over the reality of what is happening on the ground and indeed decided to work with everyone, statutory and voluntary bodies alike for the benefit of those who survived the horrors of June 14th.

The death toll and needless loss of life have left everyone numb and bewildered and asks why and how could it have happened? We sincerely hope that the public enquiry will offer answers and allow closure, if not reconciliation as one can seldom forget the loss of life of a loved one, a friend, or a neighbour.

On the day, Al-Hasaniya was at the site wanting to provide hands on support to those affected by the fire at 2am and opened its doors to those wanting to have a place away from the site. We have continued to providing every means of support possible. We are humbled by the sheer generosity of the public and our young people have been exemplary.

Al-Hasaniya remains committed to providing emotional and psychological support to Moroccan and Arabic speaking families. Our priority is to ensure we support families to start making sense of the overwhelming loss at all levels. Working closely with colleagues in the statutory and voluntary sector, we will continue to work hard to ensure that every individual is supported.

We have worked, and continue to partner with many local organisations to support the survivors, from offering therapy, to providing hot meals, to advocating on behalf of those still seeking adequate and suitable accommodation.

We have also welcomed the leader of the Council twice to our centre, to see for herself and indeed hold surgery at our premises with those affected and other residents alike. Listening to local concerns is at the very heart of what we do and we are pleased the local authority has been stupendously supportive. The Mayor also visited our centre twice and spoke to users and survivors.

The Deputy Mayor to Sadiq Khan, Matthew Ryder also visited our centre and spoke to survivors and listened to our concerns as the only centre for Arabic-speaking women in London.

And so the last six months our centre has witnessed a myriad of events to support the survivors. We have held events and invited three schools to our garden for an afternoon respite and lunch, organised outings for mothers amongst many other activities.

Al-Hasaniya staff and trustees



Introduction:

Al-Hasaniya once again has proven to be the mouthpiece for the muffled voices. Celebrating its 32 years of excellent service delivery of the Moroccan and Arabic speaking women, we continue to do what we do best, assist, support and make a REAL difference to the hundreds of women that come to our centre every year, culminating over 12000 thousands enquiries this year alone.

Al-Hasaniya continues to survive on the bread-line and with the financial struggles impeding our work daily, we are determined not to let austerity impact on the quality of service delivery to those that need it. We have throughout the years managed to win good friends and supporters and we are deeply grateful for their support. The quality of our work and service delivery must therefore be recognised in real financial support.

2017 has been a remarkably poignant year for us and our service users. We celebrated many achievements, received two mayors, a minister and an ambassador. We held a super unique event for our Moroccan-Jewish community in Hendon; a first in our history as a British community of Moroccan heritage. We organised a super interfaith event, offering a real dialogue of friendship at the House of Lords too.

And so on the 25th July 2017, Al-Hasaniya finally received its rightful recognition by the United Nations Organisation. The Centre acquired the membership of the UN Non-Governmental Civil Society and was granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The service to this unique client group is unparalleled anywhere in the country and indeed particularly in this borough. We remain the only Moroccan women's centre in the country servicing and assisting both Moroccan and Arabic-speaking women and their families regardless of sexual orientation, faith or indeed nationality.

2017 has been as gratifying in one way as it has been traumatic on the other. The Grenfell fire tragedy has changed the political, social and moral landscape of this borough.

I hope that this national disaster, because that is what it is, has given all concerned food for thought, a pause to really reflect and see what is important in our society and country and how can we change things for the better.

The mental anguish continues and we are not holding our breath for the future of the survivors' mental well-being, especially the children, many who remain in hotels as we go to print.

It is pivotal therefore that the current stalemate is resolved, and resolved sooner rather than later. It is also important that the local authority responds positively but equally important that the survivors see what is really available, deliverable and reasonable. Responsibilities, rights and desirables are becoming somewhat blurred and we should all work together in order to move forward.

Souad Talsi MBE

Founder and senior advisor to the board of trustees



Foreword:

Tuesday 13th June 2017, was the day I returned to the UK, having been in Morocco to bury my late father who sadly passed away that month. I was exhausted but nonetheless comforted by being home with my family. It was Ramadan and the meal with my family, offered a much needed comfort and security. I felt safe, snuggled in my sofa with my children.

Suddenly the telephone rang and it was my colleague Mouna advising me that the tower was on fire. At first I thought Trellick tower where the centre is based but later as the conversation continued I realised it was Grenfell tower, where Mouna lived with her family.

I rushed out with my daughter at 2am and we both drove to the scene .By the time we got there, enormous flames were trouncing the walls of Grenfell, bursting up from the windows, up and down the many floors. Those who got there were desperately searching for ways to help those trapped in the tower. The cries of people calling for help, to date still echo in my head.

I frantically called the TMO/fire brigade and all the emergency services I could think of. Others had done the same thing and within hours the place was unrecognisable. As the fire raged uncontrollably, people screamed and cried. Those on the ground like us felt helpless, broken and beaten.

I immediately made our centre open for all, offering warm drinks and shelter for those who made it down and out of the tower.

The blaze continued raging and we now know the disastrous result or do we??

The tragedy has been poignant, horrific and possibly the biggest ever experienced by this borough if not the country. We still do not know the actual number of those who have perished. The survivors we do know and they remain at the heart of everything we do.

Mental health will be the next predicted outbreak amongst so many survivors, unless we all work together to support, offer counselling and offer guidance, many families will end up dysfunctional and the children will suffer the consequences. Putting families in hotels no matter how luxurious this form of housing might be, is simply not conducive to the well-being and long term stability of any child.

I therefore call upon all concerned to expedite the process and end the current crisis of homelessness amongst the survivors.

This tragedy should be a lesson for all and that is; there is more to life than money profit. The well-being of people, harmony, social justice and equal opportunities should be our target for a profitable society.

Fatima Mourad
Chair and trustee



Centre Manager's report:

2017 has been like no other year I have ever known or experienced. Grenfell survivors have been at the fore front of all that we do, whilst equally focusing on other projects that serve our vulnerable clients, across both the social divide and the age gap.

As the Centre manager, it has been particularly distressing to witness the destruction, death and indeed the loss of so many people; many were clients if not equally known to us as we are a very close knit community.

The tragedy has also proven to be a real test of our strength as a community and I cannot commend and applaud enough, the young people within our community, for the formidable risk they took to bring so many survivors to safety on that fateful night. They are truly unsung heroes.

I fully concur with our chair on what she says about the potential mental health problems we will encounter in people as the trauma unfolds. Even those who didn't live in Grenfell have been traumatised by losing a loved one or friend or saw and witnessed the devastation.

Our call therefore to escalate and strengthen the mental health services within the borough is pivotal, if we are to prevent further damage.

This being said the centre continues to support our women and their families across the projects we deliver which include:

- Older person's Outreach project
- The Angelou Project (Domestic Violence)
- The Mental Health Project
- The YANA (You Are Not Alone) Project
- The Emotional Well-being Project
- Arabic speaking Psychotherapist Programme

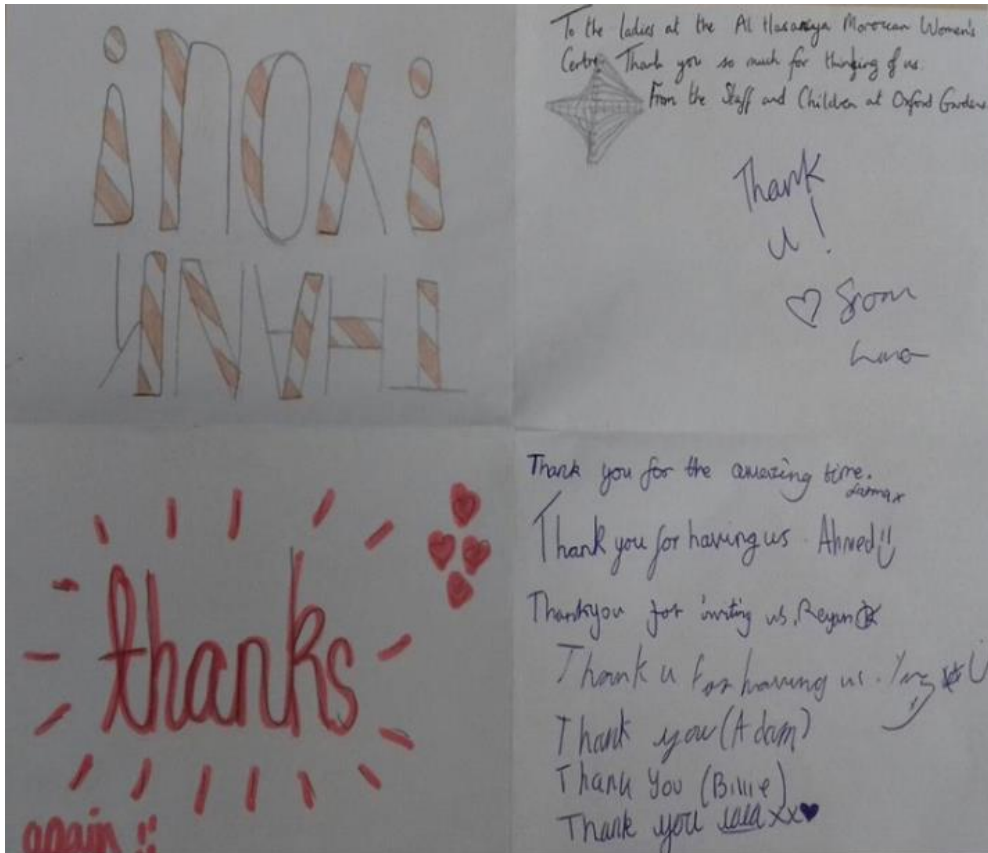
Within these projects and the people who have accessed our centre, we have seen 4120 service users so far this year.

We continue to serve our community with very little means and we call upon those who can, to support us as the centre is in a desperate state of dilapidation and needs a good face lift and upgrading to make it hospitable and friendly, to welcome our women and their families. The last time it was fully upgraded was in 1990!

Nadia Elbhiri
Centre Manager and company secretary



A lovely thank you card we received from some of the students after the event



Al-Hasaniya invited students from local schools in Kensington and Chelsea to come together at the Moroccan Garden in remembering the victims of Grenfell Tower

