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A special prosecutor is the best option to ensure Grenfell justice

Such a figure would help to restore confidence in the justice system and ensure accountability

Anthony Wilson

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The Grenfell Tower fire is one of the most shocking disasters in modern British history and the pursuit of justice is still fraught with delays and complexities.

Following last week's report from the seven-year public inquiry, there has been criticism of a failure to prosecute those responsible and a resurgence of calls for the appointment of a special prosecutor — a figure who could restore confidence in the justice system and ensure accountability.

Grenfell survivors are frustrated, with many saying that they are [still waiting for justice](#). The inquiry's damning report accused a web of "dishonest" companies and a long chain of government failures for the disaster. With this in mind, the case

for appointing a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute those responsible grows ever stronger.

Special prosecutors are appointed in the US in three situations: when there is a conflict of interest, when the case exceeds the capacities of the authorities, or when an outside party is required to restore public trust. The Grenfell case undoubtedly meets these criteria.



Seventy-two people died in the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017

GURBUZ BINICI/GETTY IMAGES

While Sir Keir Starmer's background as a former head of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not in itself necessitate such an appointment, the sheer complexity of the Grenfell investigation does.

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In May, Scotland Yard disclosed that it was managing 27,000 lines of inquiry and had already taken more than 12,000 witness statements. This level of inquiry is far more extensive than what a prosecutor would typically manage in an average case, which calls into question the capacity of existing systems to handle it effectively.

There are also problems around the fact that recent prosecutions — brought by both the CPS and the Serious Fraud Office — have been plagued by failures in evidence disclosure. Therefore, it is vital that any investigation into Grenfell is conducted with full transparency.

The technical complexity of the Grenfell case adds another layer of difficulty. The inquiry has revealed significant evidence relating to the cause of the fire and the flammable cladding used on the building's exterior. A special prosecutor, with access to a team of multidisciplinary experts, could more effectively handle this wealth of technical detail than a conventional prosecutor might.

The Grenfell disaster was the result of a catastrophic failure of multiple agencies, companies, and individuals. It is essential that this systemic failure is not replicated in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible.

A special prosecutor, with the independence, resources and expertise to navigate the intricacies of the case, is surely the best option to ensure that justice is served for the victims of Grenfell.

Anthony Wilson is a solicitor at McNair International and former department head at the Serious Fraud Office

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