

Capitalism has left the United Kingdom in Shock and the Bodies are still being Counted

By: Dr. Abdullah Robin

The capitalist system does not look after the affairs of the majority of the people for their own good. It merely ensures that they are healthy enough and educated enough to provide the services needed to make the richest people richer and no more. Sometimes, the failure of the capitalist system is so obvious that governments have to act fast to restore confidence, but last week, the government of the United Kingdom was too slow, and the leadership of the Church of England had to announce a debate about the state of the country. They said that now is a “critical time in the nation’s history” and issued a call for prayers “for all those elected to parliament that they will prioritise the common good of all people in everything they do”! A series of terrorist attacks, the withdrawing of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit) and the surprising failure of the Conservative Party to win a majority in the recent election have all lowered confidence in the system. Then came the shocks of the last week.

Last week, the United Kingdom suffered tragedy. A fire in ‘Grenfell Tower’ killed at least 79 people, some say hundreds, but the bodies will not be counted officially until they are identified which is difficult because of the ferocity of the fire. It happened in the richest district of London, but those who lived and died in the 24-storey high Tower were poor. Grenfell Tower belonged to the local council and contained 120 flats. When a fire broke-out, the fire alarms could not be heard; there was no sprinkler system and the recent addition of ‘cladding’ to the outside of the building caused the fire to spread very rapidly because it was made of dangerous, flammable material. The cladding could have been made of a fire-resistant substitute for just 5000 pounds sterling extra on top of the 8.6 million pounds sterling that were spent on refurbishing Grenfell Tower last year. The residents warned from the danger of fire but no one listened, and those who would not stop complaining about safety to the agency managing the Tower for the local council were sent letters threatening them with court actions.

One priest, Robert Thompson, said in his Sunday sermon after the fire: “The people on the lowest incomes of this parish simply do not feel listened to, either this week or in previous years, by those in power. Worse than that, what the whole issue of the cladding and the lack of sprinklers may well highlight is that some people in our society have simply become excess and debris on our neoliberal, unregulated, individualistic, capitalist and consumerist society.” ([The Guardian](#))

The cladding was not put on Grenfell Tower to make life better for the poor residents, but to make the poor tower look less ugly to the rich neighbours who wanted to hide it so as to increase the value of their expensive properties! This is the capitalism which the church leaders woke-up to last week. This capitalism continued to fail the people after the fire. Neighbours were generous in providing help, and mosques and churches opened their doors for the victims but the government did nothing until marches and riots threatened them. Some survivors were given emergency housing in faraway cities with threats that if they didn’t accept their new accommodation, they would get no other help. Other survivors were given places in local hotels and just 10 pounds a day to live on even though most of the survivors had to leave their clothes, money, phones and all other belongings behind them. After that scandal, each family was promised 5000 pounds, but this is not enough to bury the dead and to buy new clothes and furniture for the living.

This fire occurred during the month of Ramadan, and Muslims raised the alarm and helped their neighbours to escape. Many residents thanked Ramadan for their survival which contradicts with the lies of successive governments in the United Kingdom that Islamic values are a source of evil. The current Prime Minister has used recent terrorist attacks to increase suspicion against Muslims to such an extent that another shock occurred in London after the fire. A terrorist attack by a non-Muslim left one Muslim dead and wounded 11 others outside a mosque in London on the 19th of June, and anti-Muslim extremists are deflecting attention away from the failure of capitalism towards the exaggerated danger of Muslims in the United Kingdom.

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