

# Grenfell's legacy must be an end to unsafe homes

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The Grenfell fire in 2017 took 72 lives and no survivors have received compensation  
DAVID MIRZOEFF/PA

**F**ive years on, Grenfell Tower remains shrouded in plastic, a monument to tragedy and shame in one of the world's richest cities. On June 14, 2017, a kitchen fire spread to the flammable cladding on the skyscraper's exterior, turning it into what one witness described as a "matchstick". Seventy-two people died and some 640,000 people are still living in buildings covered in Grenfell-style cladding.

The question on one placard in the aftermath was: "Why?" The [definitive account of the Grenfell fire](#) in today's Sunday Times finally provides an answer.

Successive governments failed to ban aluminium composite material cladding used on Grenfell, even though it catastrophically failed a safety test in 2001. A loophole also meant that cladding with a highly flammable core could be used on high-rise buildings, provided it was coated with a thin fire-proof surface. Greedy materials companies — Arconic, Kingspan and Celotex — exploited the loophole and made misleading statements on the panels that fuelled the fire. Eric Pickles, housing secretary from 2010-15, put off a promised review of building rules after six died in a 2009 fire.

No Grenfell survivors have received compensation. If there is to be a shred of justice, the 94 per cent of dangerous flats whose defects are outstanding must be fixed. Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary, has put together £9.1 billion for repairs; now cladding manufacturers must be forced to pay too. Addressing the fire-safety problems that have imprisoned thousands of leaseholders in unsaleable properties since Grenfell would be a tiny redemption in a story that epitomises the worst of capitalism and government.