

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement for Part 1, Module 1

Supplemental Witness statement of Hugh Grant

I, Hugh Grant of C/o Collyer Bristow LLP, 4 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4DF will say as follows:

Documents  
referred to

1. This supplementary statement deals with the recent birth of my daughter, and the way some sections of the press have treated Tinglan Hong (her mother) and myself.
2. For the purposes of this statement, I refer to a small paginated bundle of documents marked "HG2". Where I refer to page numbers in this statement, I am referring to pages in "HG2".
3. On April 24th (four months into the pregnancy) the News of the World's front page headline was "Hugh's Secret Girl". The story speculated that Tinglan might be pregnant with my child, and the story was illustrated with pictures of both of us. We had had no idea that they had been taken, and having seen the pictures in the paper we realised we must have been under surveillance for some time. I have developed a pretty good nose for when a long lens might be on me, but this was in a new class. We didn't comment on the story after it was published, and we were not contacted in advance to give us an opportunity to assert our privacy or correct any errors.
4. In subsequent weeks Tinglan, living alone, found herself frequently followed by a photographer. He sometimes came very close to take pictures of her and she was often frightened.
5. At the height of the phone hacking news storm in July, I was on Question Time discussing the News of the World's closure, Rupert Murdoch and press standards. Late that same night Tinglan received a number of phone calls on her home phone (where she lived alone) from an unknown number. She didn't answer. Then her mobile began to ring. Again, she didn't recognise the number

Pages 1-3

Documents

referred to

so she didn't pick up. Finally she did, and a man's voice said, "Tell Hugh Grant to shut the fuck up." She had no idea where this man had got her phone numbers.

6. When she told me this story the next day, my lawyer and I arranged for her to talk to the police. In the end she didn't want to. She was anxious that it might have meant potentially drawing attention to her relationship with me, which in turn might have attracted more unwanted media attention. I had previously told her about leaks from police to press.
7. It was from the same fear of bringing her into the cross hairs of press attention that when I bought a house for Tinglan and my child to live in I asked my cousin to be the name on the deeds. I knew that any public record linking me to Tinglan would risk exposing her to more intrusion.
8. This was also the reason why I thought it was sensible for me not to be present at the birth. As detailed in my main statement, I have had too many experiences of hospital staff being paid to leak information to the press. It wasn't that I was worried about people knowing I was the father of a child. It was a determination to try and protect Tinglan and my child from a press firestorm. Tinglan was well aware of my concerns and agreed with my decision. I also knew that she was well supported at the birth by both her parents and my cousin.
9. Naturally, I was very keen to see my daughter as soon as possible, even if it could only be for a short time, so in the end I took a risk and visited the day after the birth. Of course I cannot say for sure that someone at the hospital leaked the details of my visit, but it was very soon after that that my assistant started getting persistent messages from the Daily Mail saying that they knew about the visit and the birth. They even knew the disguised name that Tinglan had checked into the hospital under.
10. The Mail continued to besiege my assistant and my PR people in New York for a comment. My American publicist in particular was astonished that the Daily Mail even managed to plague her in the evenings on her mobile phone - a number she keeps famously private. They kept threatening that they were going to print the

Page 4

Documents

referred to

story the next day anyway and just wanted a comment. I suspected it was "fishing" and continued to ask everyone to say nothing. It worked. For a couple of weeks the Mail didn't print. My suspicion was, and remains, that the paper were reluctant to print based solely on the information they had because it had been obtained unethically and perhaps illegally from a source at the hospital.

11. During this time the Mail also repeatedly rang Tinglan on her mobile. She always hung up. In the end the calls and texts, coming from several different numbers but always from Daily Mail reporters, became so persistent and disturbing, especially to a woman recovering from childbirth, that she was forced to change her number.
12. Finally the story ended up in the hands of "Us" magazine in America. They called my PR people and said they were going to print. They did. And at this point I made the judgement that it was better for me to say something, giving the truthful facts, before the rest of the media and in particular the UK tabloids printed potentially garbled or twisted versions of the story.
13. I was by now in Germany working on a film. When the press storm broke I found a 24 hour gap in the schedule and flew back to see what I could do about the crowd of photographers and reporters besieging Tinglan's home. They had been ringing repeatedly at her door and door stepping neighbours.
14. When I arrived that evening I asked them if there was anything I could do or say to make them leave a new and frightened young mother in peace. They said show us the baby. I refused. I asked them if they thought it was acceptable for grown men to be harassing and frightening a mother and baby for commercial profit. They just shrugged and took more pictures.
15. The siege continued for several more days, as it did outside my own home nearby. In the end my lawyer sent warning letters to the main papers and photo agencies.
16. In the meantime, all the tabloid papers, and the Mail in particular, were sending reporters to find whatever dirt they could on Tinglan. Articles appeared making snide remarks about her being an "actress". In fact she has never been, or wanted to be an actress.

Page 5

Documents

referred to

This was a mistake made by one of the papers early on, who confused her with a Chinese actress I had once met for about five minutes a year ago in China. But all the papers copied the mistake out faithfully as fact, and used it to imply she was either a failed actress because the internet showed no credits for her, that she had false pretensions, or that the term was a gloss for something worse

17. Prior to the story breaking, and while they were begging for quotes stand up their story, the Daily Mail had often tried to oil my representatives, referring to "the little one" and describing the birth as "wonderful" news. As soon as the story was out, this became a very determined effort to grossly intrude upon Tinglan's privacy and to humiliate her. Neighbours, work colleagues, and friends were phoned, followed and doorstepped. Money was offered. An ex boyfriend of Tinglan's was pressed (doubtless in exchange for money) into giving them personal details and photographs. He was apparently also asked to try and obtain pictures of the baby, which he did, emailing Tinglan under the guise of affectionate interest. Tinglan now suspects he is being sponsored by one of the papers to go to China and investigate her friends and family there. While I, of course, have been through press storms before and knew what to expect, I was nevertheless startled by the level of vitriol aimed at me, especially when it was based on misreporting and lies. I was repeatedly criticised and condemned for having "a new 21 year old German girlfriend". I don't. I had one dinner with a young singer in Berlin a couple of weeks ago and was photographed emerging afterwards. It was completely innocuous. She is truly just a friend, but that obviously doesn't make as good a story. Nor does it enable me to be attacked. Bild in Germany reported that there had been passionate kissing in a car. There hadn't. Nothing of the kind. But the UK press copied it out faithfully, without checking with me and ignoring two firm denials from the woman herself. Subsequently The Sun proudly published a picture of me with this "new girlfriend" taken three weeks before the birth. It wasn't even the woman I'd had dinner with. I don't know who it was. It appeared to be someone who'd asked to have her picture taken with me at a premiere in Berlin a couple of months ago.

Page 4

18. Much of the reporting at this time was based on "friends" and "insiders", none of whom actually exist in my opinion. And almost

Documents

referred to

everything was rubbish. Tinglan has never been a karacke singer. Or a receptionist. I have never tweeted, though the Mail quoted my "tweets" as a reliable source. To pad out articles quotes were invented. I never, for instance, declared on Tinglan's doorstep "I have come to protect my baby". Nevertheless this quote soon (like the "girlfriend") became "fact" and was repeated everywhere.

19. Much of the Daily Mail reporting has been by Keith Gladdis. He is also the person behind most of the texting and phoning of Tinglan since the birth. Keith Gladdis worked for the News of the World until July. Some of the pictures that are printed of Tinglan when pregnant, taken either covertly when she was under surveillance, or openly and expressly against her will, are the ones used in the News of the World article back in April. The Mail appears therefore to be picking up where the disgraced News of the World left off.

Page 5

20. This supplementary statement is written nine days after the story broke. Tinglan is still being followed and harassed. Yesterday she was followed in her car and photographed coming into her house. In his efforts to restrain these photographers my lawyer asked if it might be possible to get pictures of them and their registration plates. Tinglan's mother, a lady of 61, started to take photos of one photographer parked outside. He immediately turned his camera on her, took some pictures and then accelerated hard towards her so fast that Tinglan's mother had to jump out of the way. Then he did a U- turn at the end of the street and drove fast towards her again in a deliberately menacing way. She was, and remains, extremely frightened. As a result of this, and of all the harassment since the birth, my lawyer is now going to apply for an injunction against all photographers taking pictures of Tinglan and our daughter. I have also arranged for a security guard to be outside the house and to protect them both when they have to go out. As I say, I have been in Berlin much of the time since the birth, but I managed to get to the house again yesterday afternoon. As I approached I took a picture of a different photographer's car and registration plate. When I tried to get a picture of his face, he turned away and held up his hands and drove off. This is not untypical. I have always found

Documents

referred to

that paparazzi are very protective of their privacy.

21. My main concern was and remains with the harassment, untruths and intrusion that Tinglan has been through and continues to undergo. However, as I said in my main statement, it has always been a very dangerous business to criticise the popular press and their methods. And in the last nine days most of the tabloids have set their columnists on me. For sheer density of abuse no one has been able to beat Amanda Platell in a piece she wrote in the Daily Mail. In the space of one 1300 word piece, based largely on the misreportings I mentioned above (the non-existent 21 year old girlfriend etc) she accused me of being lonely, bitter, oleaginous, misogynistic, self-obsessed, irresponsible, insensitive, uncaring and in 'fawdry, inexorable decline'. It appeared to me at the time and to others (judging by those I spoke to and the comments below the piece online) to be a pretty blatant attempt at character assassination. Like most of the similar pieces in other papers it also referenced my low opinion of the tabloid press as a specific reason why I should be loathed. I mention this not so much as a moan about critical opinion pieces based on lazy untruths - this is part and parcel of being in the cross hairs of the popular press in this country. Hate sells. I mention it more because its particular savagery in this instance was remarked on by so many; and it was their opinion that I was being made an example of. The message seemed to be that anyone like me who had the effrontery to speak openly about phone hacking, intrusion, harassment and other tabloid abuse, or who agreed to be a witness at this inquiry, could expect similar treatment. The tabloids talk a lot these days about freedom of expression. But criticism of themselves has never been allowed. That is why they have had had so little of it for so long.

Pages 14-24

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

DATED the 11 day of November 2011

SIGNED: