

The End of a Saga



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We are deeply saddened to learn about the untimely demise of our long-time comrade, Vijay K. Nagaraj, on Friday (August 25, 2017) in Sri Lanka. Vijay was on his way to conduct a [workshop](#) in Batticaloa from [Colombo](#), when the car he was driving met with an accident.

Vijay Nagaraj was a good friend of the region. During his stint as the Director of [Amnesty](#) International [India](#) in the turn of the century, he had taken it upon himself to ensure that the human [rights](#) violations committed by the Indian [state](#) in Northeast [India](#) receive all the attention that it deserved. Despite severe restrictions placed on the the work of human [rights](#) defenders, he and his colleagues at [Amnesty](#) International showed tremendous patience and courage to conduct workshops in different parts of the Northeast. What endeared him to a lot of activists in the region was his openness and humility. Never once did he try to preach about human [rights](#) ideals and standards from the lofty perch of [Amnesty](#) International's [India](#) office. Instead, he listened to our idiosyncratic views and attempted to understand our obdurate positions, as only a friend can.

Many today will not recall clearly the terror unleashed by the [state](#) in the 1990s and early 2000s. Our organisations lost many members to secret killers and the [state](#) machinery. During those desolate days, it meant a lot to have the unqualified support of comrades like Vijay Nagaraj. After he left [Amnesty](#) International, he went back to work with Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan. A few years later, he joined the Tata Institute of [Social](#) Sciences and was instrumental in reshaping the structure of the prestigious educational institution. He then left to work in Geneva, before turning to [Colombo](#) to work for Law and Society Trust there. In all these places, he worked tirelessly to make institutions of the [state](#) more accountable to the people it often terrorised. Vijay Nagaraj knew the world needed solidarity to extend from the villages of Devdungri, to the plantations of Sri Lanka and discussion tables in Geneva.

We will do well to remember his dedication and commit ourselves to the spirit of solidarity that he embodied in his lifetime.

Amiya Gogoi (Asom Mohila Sachetan Mancha)

Neingulo Krome (Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights)

Bubumoni Goswami (Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti)

Babloo Loitongbam (Human Rights Alert)

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