

Obituary:

Professor Sir Nigel Rodley

Obituaries are normally formal but Nigel was both a close friend and a friend of the Human Rights Collegium and therefore strict formality would have amused him.

Nigel was truly one of the giants of human rights and it was a privilege to have known him. As Amnesty International's first legal officer he not only created what has become a world wide respected authority on prisoners' rights but he also used its authority to campaign effectively for a global treaty against torture. He then helped draft the UN Convention Against Torture.

There was nobody more knowledgeable or better equipped to be appointed UN Rapporteur Against Torture and in this and at Amnesty he helped countless people both inside and out of prison. Later he was appointed by the United Kingdom to be a member of the UN Human Rights Committee and was made its Chair. His book *The Treatment of Prisoners under International Law*¹ is the first point of reference for anyone seeking an authoritative opinion. Once when he was arguing a point of law, his opponent read a quotation to him. He stopped and said he could not argue against that and enquired from where the citation came. He was surprised when he was told - it was from his own book.

After Amnesty he returned to academic life and LSE must have rued the day they let him get away. The LSE's loss was the University of Essex's great gain and he together with Kevin Boyle, added much to the Essex Human Rights Centre. Sharing teaching with him was a pleasure. He also gained much enjoyment in meeting former students working in human rights all over the world.

He knew everybody at the United Nations and everybody liked him, coming over to him and greeting him with warm hugs. He loved being part of what he called the Amnesty Family and warmly introduced colleagues into it. Everybody who knew Nigel knew his wife Lyn and they entertained friends from all over the world both in their home in North London and later in Essex.

His travelling was legendary and he often left travelling to the airport until the last moment. His choice of exercise was sprinting through Geneva airport to catch a plane. Once when he and Lyn were staying over with us, he happily remarked that he did not have to get up early because he was only flying from Heathrow. Hearing noises early in the morning we awoke to find he was in fact flying from Gatwick.

Despite his huge workload he always managed to return phone calls within minutes, even when he was in different time zones and always agreed to projects he thought valuable to human rights. When I asked him if he would sit as a member of this journal's advisory board he said yes without hesitating.

I was fortunate to be trained by Nigel in how to represent Amnesty at the UN and he was always very supportive and encouraging and I owe him a great deal as a mentor and a friend. He taught me that although we were representing very brave individuals who needed urgent help, it was important also to enjoy life.

As an indicator of how highly he was thought of all over the world from Costa Rica to Sweden his friends have called wanting to share their shock and grief. At Queen Mary's we all extend our warmest sympathies to Lyn.

Geraldine van Bueren, QC.

¹ *The Treatment of Prisoners under International Law* (OUP, 1st edition 1987, 2nd edition 1999, 3rd edition 2009 (with Matt Pollard)).