

# Amnesty faces scrutiny as inquiry links Paris worker's suicide to his job

Tuesday 23 October 2018, by [McVEIGH Karen](#) (Date first published: 22 October 2018).

## Questions raised about workplace culture as organisation awaits outcome of further investigation into death of Gaëtan Mootoo

An [Amnesty International](#) researcher who killed himself in his Paris office repeatedly asked for help, but his requests “fell on deaf ears”, according to documents from a French investigation seen by the Guardian.

The conclusions of an Amnesty [France](#) inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Gaëtan Mootoo raise questions over the duty of care towards staff at the human rights organisation. A separate investigation by the French state linked Mootoo's death to his work, the Guardian understands.

Mootoo, 65, Amnesty's west Africa researcher and a respected employee at the organisation for more than 30 years, took his life at Amnesty's Paris office on 26 May. He left a note in which he complained of work pressure and a lack of support from management.

Five weeks after Mootoo's death, in a separate incident, Roz McGregor, 28, a paid intern at Amnesty, from Leatherhead in Surrey, was found dead. Her family has expressed concern that the human rights group failed to offer sufficient support after she developed “acute anxiety” during five months working at its Geneva office.

Amnesty International, which has [launched independent inquiries](#) into the suicides of Mootoo and McGregor, said it had cooperated fully with the investigation by the French authorities and accepted its decision.

Confidential documents from the Amnesty France inquiry, seen by the Guardian, conclude that the international secretariat, Mootoo's employers, did “not carry out sufficient support work”.

The investigators concluded: “Gaëtan Mootoo did not find solutions to adapt to the different changes to the international secretariat, which did not carry out sufficient support work, which would have enabled him to find his place in the new organisation. However, he repeatedly asked for help without suitable actions being taken to meet his needs.”

The inquiry examined only the “professional factors that could be related to” his suicide, according to the documents.

A colleague, quoted in the report, said: “He was looking for a way to get some assistance in Paris. He felt that he had been left to his own devices and marginalised. He said many times that he was suffering from this. It was very hard for him to be all alone.

“He never complained about his work, NEVER, but always about the lack of support.”

The colleague said they last spoke to Mootoo a month before he died. At the time Mootoo told him he felt “at the end of his tether, that he could not do it any more”.

The Amnesty France investigation found “changes to his way of working, workload, changes to his place of work”, including the level of complexity, “worried him more and more”.

“These working constraints had an impact on the way he carried out his work and the difficulty he himself expressed; the feeling of no longer being able to carry out his work properly. The multiplication of these constraints led to a real ethical problem for Gaëtan Mootoo.”

In a statement, Amnesty said: “The [Amnesty International](#) movement is deeply saddened by the tragic death of our colleague Gaëtan Mootoo, researcher for west Africa, who had been with the organisation for more than 30 years. His death came as a huge shock and our thoughts and deep condolences are with his family, friends and close colleagues.

“The French review raises serious concerns and we give an absolute assurance that we are treating this tragedy with the gravity and priority it deserves.”

Amnesty said it was awaiting the results of the independent external inquiry into Mootoo’s death, led by James Laddie, QC, and scheduled to report in mid-November, as well as the results of a separate wellbeing review.

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## **Karen McVeigh**

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