



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION*



These are the free hands of a former slave. Nagaraj is one of 138 rescued from slavery in a brick kiln. As a free man he and his family now own and operate their own brick kiln and employ others with good work.

Nagaraj

For Nagaraj, the hope of a life of freedom was stronger than the threats and abuses he and others endured in the brick kiln. The worst part, he says, was seeing his children there, getting sick from excessive work in the searing heat, knowing that they could never go to school and would grow up to become another's property. Nagaraj himself was a slave since the age of 12.

Their owner was considered particularly brutal and was feared in the community. None would stand against him—none until Nagaraj and IJM.

After a dramatic raid led by IJM investigators working with local authorities, 78 slaves were granted official release papers and brought out of the kiln. Together with family and others totaling 138, the slaves and families from the kiln were now free men, women and children. The owner was arrested and faces criminal charges. IJM agents continue to monitor his ongoing case.

IJM-supported social workers assist the former slaves ensuring they have the opportunities and resources they need to navigate lives of newfound freedom.

Many of the men freed from the kiln formed the Dawn Association, to provide a financial safety net for the families of those who have come out of slavery. If a member is in financial need, he may request a business or personal loan at a reasonable rate so the family would never again fall prey to the economic traps of bonded slavery.

Nagaraj was unanimously elected president of Dawn Association and now runs his own brick kiln making free bricks. Smiling as he explains the economics of brick-making, the former slave bears a confidence and gratitude marked by the mathematics of freedom.

Nagaraj held a brick in his hands, extended to an audience gathered to hear his story. "This is a brick I made from my own brick kiln. This is much better stone and precious thing than what I used to build when I was in bondage. This is a very high quality stone." A free brick made with free hands.