

Shell: We Will Remember Ken Saro-Wiwa and Friends

"I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is here on trial and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The Company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war that the company has waged in the Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war be duly punished. The crime of the Company's dirty wars against the Ogoni people will also be punished." Ken Saro-Wiwa - 1995

Thursday, 10 November marks the 10th Anniversary of the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight colleagues, Baribor Bera, Saturday Dobe, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen, Paul Levura and Felix Nuate by the **State of Nigeria** for campaigning against the devastation of the Niger Delta by oil companies, **especially Shell**. They represented the **"Movement for Survival of the Ogoni Peoples'."**

Who is Ken Saro-Wiwa: Ken, was an academic, civil servant, businessman, author and most importantly at his death, a community activist. In 1990, Saro-Wiwa started to dedicate himself to the amelioration of the problems of the oil producing regions of the Niger Delta. Focusing on his homeland, Ogoni, he launched a non-violent movement for social and ecological justice - MOSOP. In this role he challenged the oil companies and the Nigerian government accusing them of waging an ecological war against the Ogoni and precipitating the genocide of the Ogoni people. He was so effective, that by 1993 the oil companies had to pull out of Ogoni. This cost him his life. Ken was sentenced to death by the Nigerian military regime and was executed in 1995.

All Ken and his fellow community members did was defend their right to ensure that they live in an environment that does not harm their health and well-being. In September 1998, 20 Ogoni who had been imprisoned since May 1994 on the same charges as Ken Saro-Wiwa were finally released, when all charges against them were dropped.

The death of Ken Saro-Wiwa has left a permanent blot on the history of the world. Forever evidence and struggles will emerge proclaiming the truth that Ken and his community brothers stood for.

The fact that people are killed and polluted is due to the link between corporations search for profit and governments that facilitate the making of these profits.

Since the executions in 1995:

- In December 1995, Brian Anderson, the Managing Director of Shell Nigeria admitted to the Sunday Times that a "black hole of corruption" existed in Shell's Nigerian operations;
- In January 1996, four youths were killed by the Mobile Police during Ogoni Day celebrations;

- In March the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 1,000 Ogonis had fled to Benin since Ogoni Day;
- In the same month, the US State Department declared that Nigeria constituted a "classic picture of human rights abuse". The report described Saro-Wiwa's trial "completely lacking in respect for due process";
- In May, Ken Saro-Wiwa was posthumously elected to the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Global 500 Roll of Honour. At all stages of his campaign, Saro-Wiwa advocated peaceful resistance to the forces that would deprive the Ogoni people of a say in the development of their region", UNEP said in a statement;
- In May, Bopp van Dessel, Shell's former head of environmental studies in Nigeria, states that Shell ignored repeated warnings that its oil production operations in Nigeria were causing widespread environmental damage. "They were not meeting their own standards, they were not meeting international standards. Any Shell site that I saw was polluted. Any terminal that I saw was polluted. It is clear to me that Shell was devastating the area.";
- September MOSOP accuses Shell of "divide-and-rule tactics" as Shell meets with state security and groups from Ogoniland, but excludes MOSOP;
- January 1997 over 80 000 people celebrate Ogoni day. People injured, arrested and detained. Mosop claims that there is a deployment of more than 2000 armed soldiers in Ogoniland, and that "...Ogoni stands in the threshold of complete extinction";
- November 1998, the neighbouring Ijaw Tribe adopts the 'Kaiama Declaration' calling for an end to oil production. The military crackdown against the Ijaw was both predictable and brutal. There were deaths of, "possibly over 200 people; the torture and inhuman treatment of others; and the arbitrary detention of many more", recorded Human Rights Watch (HRW). Girls as young as 12 were raped or tortured;
- November 1999 on the return of civilian rule, Odi, a town Ijawland is destroyed. As many as 2000 people were killed. HRW calls on the government to withdraw the troops;
- April 2000 government refuses to release Ken Saro-Wiwa body for burial. More than 100 000 Ogoni's attend the week-long events.

The flame of resistance continues to burn along with the flaring of gas in the Delta region.

South Africa and Shell:

- Shell supported the apartheid state, while this illegitimate state disposed millions of people of their birthright to their land, and tortured and killed its citizens;
- In 1995, the south Durban community accuses Shell of polluting their environment and thereby denying them their right to an environment that not harmful to their health and well-being;
- In August 1995 Shell underground petrol pipeline leaks and people have to be hospitalised;
- In May 1998, a huge explosion results in a release of up to 9 tons of hydrflouric acid into the environment;

- In January 2000, Shell admits to underreporting their Sulphur Dioxide pollution as a result of community challenging their pollution.
- In March 2001, 26 tons of tetra-ethyl lead leaks into from rusted tank. Shell admits to using different standards – double standards – from the UK in maintaining the storage tanks.
- In July, community discover leaking Shell petrol in community storm water drains. More than a million litres of petrol leaks out of Shell underground pipelines settling under community homes. Subsequently Shell manager pressurises eThekweni Mayor to reconsider legal action against Shell.
- In April 2004, Shell has emergency shutdown which results in pollution and black smoke settling over Durban which is visual more than 20 kilometres away.

There is a clear disregard and disrespect for human rights by Shell, and this is supported by both governments globally who fail to respond to the calls of community to hold Shell accountable for their environmental injustices. Instead of holding Shell accountable there is clear evidence that government's role has been one to support Shell's continual drive for profits at the expense of people's lives.

WE CALL ON PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO STAND UP AND SUPPORT THE NIGERIAN PEOPLES AND TO MOBILISE TO ENSURE THAT SHELL IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS!

"The Ogoni have been gradually ground to dust by the combined effort of the multi-national oil company, Shell Petroleum Development Company, the murderous ethnic majority in Nigeria and the country's military dictatorships." (Ken Saro-Wiwa; 1992)

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Information from www.rememberkensarowiwa.com & www.groundwork.org.za

For more information on Shell and Ken Saro-Wiwa visit:

www.rememberkensarowiwa.com;

www.november10.com;

www.groundwork.org.za;

www.shellfacts.com.