

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Extraordinary Memorial to Executed Writer Saro-Wiwa Launches in London on 10th November 2006

***“Lord take my soul but the struggle continues”***

*[Ken Saro-Wiwa’s final words before his execution, 10.11.95]*

**10th November 2006** will see the unveiling of a unique **‘Living Memorial’ in London\*** to the murdered Nigerian writer and activist **Ken Saro-Wiwa\*\*** and his eight Ogoni colleagues. The memorial, commissioned by the **Remember Saro-Wiwa coalition\*\*\*** and created by celebrated sculptor **Sokari Douglas Camp**, takes the form of **an enormous, silver steel, Nigerian bus** and will be **the first mobile memorial that the UK has ever seen**. It will appear at different sites all over England between November 2006 and November 2008 (before finding a permanent home in London), generating debate about issues of climate change and oil production, social justice and Britain’s impact on the rest of the world.

Remember Saro-Wiwa supporter and Mayor of London, **Ken Livingstone** says:

*“Ken Saro-Wiwa represents something vitally important... I am proud to be supporting the Living Memorial to Ken Saro-Wiwa in London. I hope that it will become a beacon, both for Londoners and all those around the world who are fighting for social and environmental justice.”*

The form of the memorial will be as powerful as the ideas behind it. Project curator **David A Bailey** says:

*“Sokari Douglas Camp’s bus radically challenges our ideas about what a ‘memorial’ means. It could not be further away from the Victorian concept of a static bronze figure. Not only is it mobile but it is also open inside and so it will become a free space for discussion, film screenings and education about the vital issues that Ken Saro-Wiwa campaigned for - a truly Living Memorial. Britain’s civic spaces are still overwhelmingly dominated by centuries of conventional monuments to aristocracy, empire and colonialism - this work will also contribute to the growing debate about changing that representation.”*

\*Saro-Wiwa and eight of his colleagues were executed by the Nigerian government 11 years ago for protesting against the devastation of the Niger delta by western oil corporations, in particular Shell and Chevron. There was worldwide condemnation at the time - both of the executions (described as “judicial murder”) and the appalling oil pollution that had led to Saro-Wiwa’s campaign for non-violent change in the first place. However, the situation in the Niger Delta in 2006 is, if anything, worse today - not only is the area still one of the poorest in Nigeria, not only does the practice of gas flaring still continue, but the region has now become heavily militarised. **Ken Wiwa**, Saro-Wiwa’s son, who will be launching the Memorial in London says:

*“The memory of the injustice done to my father and the other Ogoni remains vivid in the memory of the people of Niger Delta. This anniversary is an opportunity to reward non-violence rather than the violence that is predominant in the Delta today. What is taking place in London serves to highlight that message to the international community.”*

The Living Memorial, supported by 15 major organisations ranging in concern from human rights to the arts, is the brainchild of the London arts and social justice group PLATFORM. Project co-ordinator and PLATFORM director **Dan Gretton** says:

*“Shell and the Nigerian government might like us all to conveniently forget about Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni colleagues, but this Memorial will not let that happen. It has been said that ‘the struggle of humanity against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting’ and we feel that art has a central role to play in this struggle. But this project is not only about remembering nine inspirational men who died for their beliefs. It is also about helping people in this country understand the enormous, and often devastating, impacts that British corporations have around the world. The Memorial is about shaping future debate on these critical issues.”*

ENDS

For further information about the Living Memorial Launch please contact **Dan Gretton on 0208 533 6300 / 07749 422953 or dan@platformlondon.org** or **Gareth Evans on 07837 043806**

Please also visit the extensive Remember Saro-Wiwa website - [www.remembersarowiwa.com](http://www.remembersarowiwa.com) and Sokari Douglas Camp's website - [www.sokari.co.uk](http://www.sokari.co.uk)

#### **Notes to editors:**

\* **The Launch will take place at I am on 10th November** - a short Press Conference will be followed by a Photocall and the **Unveiling of the Memorial outside 60, Farringdon Road, London EC1**. All those supporting the Launch at the Press Conference, including **Ken Wiwa, Sokari Douglas Camp, Anita Roddick, Lee Jasper, Baroness Young, Kate Allen (Director Amnesty), John Sauven (Director Greenpeace)** will be available for interview.

\*\*\* **Remember Saro-Wiwa** is a coalition of organisations and individuals initiated and co-ordinated by PLATFORM, including: African Writers Abroad, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Diversity Art Forum, English PEN, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Index on Censorship, Mayor of London, Minorities of Europe, People & Planet, Anita & Gordon Roddick, South Bank Centre, SpinWatch and Stakeholder Democracy Network.

**Financial supporters** to date include: Arts Council England - London, The Ken Saro-Wiwa Foundation, Greenpeace, The Roddick Foundation, The Staples Trust, The Tedworth Trust, PLATFORM, and private individuals.

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