



## Ken Saro-Wiwa

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

### Author Profile

A member of Nigeria's Ogoni ethnic group, Saro-Wiwa was educated at the government college at Umuahia and at the University of Ibadan. He later held a wide variety of administrative positions in the government, including education commissioner in Rivers State in the late 1960's, and information and home affairs commissioner during the early 1970's. In addition, he was a publisher and a writer, and he served as president of the Association of Nigerian Authors. His works include two children's books, a collection of poetry, a collection of short stories, a novel, and his last work, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*. Saro-Wiwa also created a popular situation comedy, *Basi and Company*, which satirized the get-rich-quick mentality of Nigerian officials who exploited Nigeria's natural resources.

In 1990 Saro-Wiwa helped found the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). He claimed that the oil revenue from Ogoniland, on the Niger River Delta in eastern Nigeria, was being used to enrich the Nigerian elite and that Ogoniland was being ruined by the consequent pollution. MOSOP planned to boycott the June, 1993, presidential elections. Political opposition developed from within MOSOP over this issue and in May, 1994, a riot occurred at a meeting in Giokoo resulting in the death of four progovernment Ogoni. Although Saro-Wiwa was not present, he was arrested for allegedly instructing his supporters to "deal with" his political opponents. Human rights groups claimed that his methods were based on nonviolence.

Saro-Wiwa and four other Ogoni were tried and convicted by a special tribunal in which the military held a great amount of influence and precluded the possibility of appeal. Saro-Wiwa was hanged with eight other Ogoni activists on November 10, 1995. Afterward several witnesses for the prosecution stated that they had been bribed to testify against him. International reaction was severely critical of the military government of General Sani Abacha. The fifty-two-member Commonwealth, which includes Great Britain and most of its former colonies, threatened Nigeria with exclusion unless democracy were restored; no member had ever been expelled previously. Human rights groups and environmental advocates accused Shell and other oil companies operating in the Niger River Delta of doing little to secure the release of Saro- Wiwa and his supporters and therefore held them indirectly responsible for their deaths.

### Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:  
<http://www.enotes.com/ken-saro-wiwa-salem>