CODESRIA Tribute to the Abuja Memorial in Honour of Professor Abubakar Momoh

The news of the untimely passing on of Professor Abubakar Momoh came as a shock to the CODESRIA community. On behalf of the Executive Committee, CODESRIA's overall membership, and colleagues in the Secretariat in Dakar, we write to reiterate our deep shock and the sense of loss following this untimely departure on 29th May 2017. We join you in this memorial event to express our sadness but also to celebrate a life lived well and to its fullest.

Abu, as he was popularly known in our academic circles, left an indelible mark on the world of scholarship and activism. Our engagement with him goes back to at least 1996 when he attended the CODESRIA Democratic Governance Institute. During that Institute, which Prof. Issa Shivji directed, Abu distinguished himself as an able academic, formidable debater and team player. In a poem Prof. Shivji wrote at the end of the Institute, he recalled Abu's creative mind; his unmatched capacity to grasp and apply concepts and his combative intellectual style that disarmed as much as it illuminated.

Abu kept sustained intellectual interest in the youth question. He taught us to appreciate and understand context if we wanted our work to illuminate the experience of ordinary people. He did exactly this in his study of Area Boys. This is what makes his work on the youth and his faith in youth struggles not only genuine but also enduring.

Above everything else, Prof. Momoh lived what he wrote. He played a critical role in the faculty union, a role that was notable in Nigeria and beyond. He was also a capable defender of academic freedom and the responsibility of intellectuals. It is perhaps because of these engagements that he naturally extended his reflections on democratic struggles in Nigeria beyond the university to broader struggles in society. Abu was willing to give his life for these struggles. We all recall his experience in Ekiti in 2009 when he almost lost his life while performing the noble civic duty of observing elections.

Dzodzi Tsikata
President

Godwin Murunga
Executive Secretary

In CODESRIA, we celebrate Abu's sense of responsibility, his integrity and his willingness to support African institutions of knowledge production. Other than CODESRIA, Abu also played a critical role in the African Association of Political Science. Only two weeks before he passed on, Abu, in an email to the then incoming Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, emphasized that the appointment was "a generational challenge requiring the highest ethical, organisational and academic capacity you can build around a long existing tradition." He offered to help in whatever way noting that "Africa is a continent with a lot of emergencies... knowledge deficit and empowering ideas certainly need to be addressed. CODESRIA has a capacity to move us to the next layer in the 21st Century quest. I am happy to also share a few thoughts of mine with you on that... we must hurry if we must make a difference on the continent."

There is more we will say at an appropriate time to celebrate Abu's life and achievements and elevate his wealth of knowledge appropriately. For the time being, we join this memorial to share in the loss of a brother, a colleague, friend, husband, father and activist for social justice. Sincere condolences to Abu's family, particularly his mother, his wife Tawa and their children, and to the extended families he belonged to. We hope that the various institutions he belonged to and served will have the courage to join together again and again to celebrate his life. Most important, and on behalf of the African Social Science community, we take the opportunity to thank his family for donating him to us repeatedly and sharing his generous spirit with us on many occasions.