

Ukrainian politician dies after fascist acid attack

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On Monday, November 5, Ukrainian activist and politician Kateryna Handziuk died from injuries suffered during a horrific acid attack carried out by members of the fascist Right Sector Volunteer Corps last July in the city of Kherson. Handziuk, 33, suffered burns on 40 percent of her body and had been hospitalized since the attack. She had undergone numerous surgeries in an attempt to save her life prior to her death.

Despite reports in the Western press praising her as a devoted “anticorruption activist,” Handziuk had a long history of involvement in right-wing politics and was complicit in the support of the very fascist forces that are now carrying out blatant attacks on journalists, government officials and ethnic minorities and that ultimately ended up murdering her.

In the weeks prior to the attack, Handziuk had come into conflict with the local veterans’ organization after protests were held against an alleged corruption scheme involving illegal logging in the Kherson region bordering the Crimean peninsula. A counter-protest was led by war veterans and right-wing elements who accused the anticorruption protestors of being “pro-Russian” activists stirring up trouble.

In Facebook posts Handziuk later charged the right-wing counter protestors with protecting corrupt Kherson officials and called them “anti-Maidan.” In an online back and forth with the right-wing thugs, one of them cryptically warned Handziuk, “Sit there quietly. Your time is coming.”

Since January 2017 alone, 55 journalists or activists have been physically attacked, and six journalists have been killed in Ukraine since the 2014 coup, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Despite Handziuk’s history as a supporter of the Maidan and the imperialist intervention in Ukraine, the

police have been slow to bring the far-right forces responsible for the attack to justice. Kherson police first attempted to pin the attack on an individual named Nikolai Novikov, who was not even in Kherson during the attack and whom Handziuk could not identify.

Later, five individuals, Vyacheslav Vishnevsky, Victor Gorbunov, Vladimir Vasyanovich, Sergei Torbin and Nikita Grabchuk, were apprehended. All of them have ties to fascist organizations in Ukraine and are veterans of the civil war in eastern Ukraine.

Sergei Torbin, who has been identified as the ringleader of the attack, is a member of the fascist Right Sector Volunteer Corps as well as the head of Kherson’s veterans’ organization. Torbin had supposedly told his conspirators that Handziuk was a “corrupt pro-Russian” activist in order to motivate them to carry out the attack.

Vasyanovich, who is suspected to be the one who threw the liter of sulfuric acid directly on Handziuk, is a disabled war veteran who proudly sports Nazi tattoos. He had earlier appeared on television and was featured in a pro-Kiev photo exhibition called the “Winners” that appeared in the European Parliament in Brussels. Popular Ukrainian video blogger and journalist Anatoli Shariy first exposed Vasyanovich’s blatant Neo-Nazism in a video published to Youtube in which Vasyanovich is seen showing off his fascist tattoos, standing in front of Nazi flags and sieg-heiling with fellow veterans.

Rumors have also recently come to light on a Facebook page titled “Who Killed Kateryna Handziuk?” implicating officials with ties to President Petro Poroshenko in ordering the attack on Handziuk. According to those around Handziuk, the order to eliminate the activist came from Igor “Dog” Pavlovsky, who currently serves as an aide to lawmaker Mykola

Palamarchuk. Palamarchuk is a member of President Poroshenko's political party in the Ukrainian parliament.

Pavlovsky has denied the allegations, but in an interview with Ukraine's 112 television station he admitted to being familiar with the ringleader of the attack, Sergei Torbin. Torbin and his thugs have worked for Pavlovsky for the past half-year and were allegedly paid \$5,000 to carry out the attack. Palamarchuk has since supposedly fired Pavlovsky.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko has criticized Handziuk's supporters for releasing supposedly secret information on his investigation, most likely because such information will make a cover-up more difficult to pull off. Handziuk's lawyers claim that Ukrainian prosecutors are refusing to classify the attack as an ordered killing so as not to be forced to reveal the direct ties between her killing and Kiev.

The *New York Times*' coverage of Handziuk's death completely whitewashed the obvious ties of the Poroshenko regime to fascist forces so as to hide the truth of Washington's support for Neo-Nazis in Ukraine, which it saw as reliable allies in its campaign of confrontation with the Russian government. From the very beginning of the so-called Maidan in 2013-2014, the *Times* has played a critical role in covering up for and lying about the extent to which the protest and the Poroshenko regime relied on fascistic forces.

Handziuk began her political career in 2003 as an activist in the right-wing Fatherland Party led by former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and headed the party's regional youth wing. Handziuk subsequently went on to serve in Kherson's city council as a member of the Fatherland Party and served as an aide to the city's mayor. She later left the party in solidarity with the mayor of Kherson, who had been expelled from the party for supposedly accepting bribes.

Handziuk fully supported the Maidan protests and the coup carried out by far-right forces in 2014 in coordination with the United States government. She had also previously taken part in Ukraine's 2004 "Orange Revolution," which had likewise been funded and supported by imperialism. Previously, she had criticized the Ukrainian government for failing to combat "pro-Russian" propaganda and implored Kiev

to win the "information" war by disseminating its own state-backed propaganda.

Whatever the propaganda in the pro-imperialist media, the coup in February 2014 has brought to power a far-right regime that terrorizes the working class and brutally moves against any dissident voices, even when they are originating from its own milieu. The political assassination of Handziuk is a thinly-veiled message by far-right forces and the Poroshenko regime that even the slightest protest against their policies will not be tolerated.



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