

Spanish police detain popular blogger at behest of Ukrainian secret service

Jason Melanovski
11 May 2022

At the behest of Ukraine's Security Service (SBU), the country's equivalent of the FBI, Spanish police detained the popular blogger Anatoly Shariy in Spain last Wednesday on suspicion of "committing treason." The police were forced to release Shariy just one day later because a Spanish judge ordered his release.

Despite his brief detainment and release, Shariy was still forced to surrender his passport and has to present himself to a court twice a month. He is also barred from leaving the country pending an extradition hearing requested by the Ukrainian government.

In addition to "treason," the SBU accuses Shariy of carrying "out illegal activities to the detriment of Ukraine's national security in the information sphere." According to the SBU, "there is reason to believe that Shariy acted on behalf of foreign entities."

Reports indicated that Shariy's arrest was coordinated between Ukrainian authorities and the Spanish police. The involvement of the government of a NATO member suggests that Shariy's pending extradition hearing may well be a mere formality that will result in his forced return to Ukraine and immediate imprisonment.

The arrest, which did not even take place on Ukrainian territory, marks a significant escalation in the Ukrainian government's targeting of political opponents.

Since the beginning of the war, Shariy has been subject to protests and harassment by right-wing thugs outside his home in Spain. Despite living abroad since 2012, Shariy's address and personal details have been published on Ukraine's Myrotvorets (Peacemaker) online database of supposed "enemies of the state," indicating that the campaign against him was being led by the SBU.

The SBU has well-known ties to the country's far-

right and proudly places itself in the tradition of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which collaborated with the Nazis in World War II and was involved in the massacres of tens of thousands of Jews and Poles.

Just prior to his arrest, Shariy reported to Mint Press News that he believed the SBU was looking to assassinate him after receiving an obviously staged email from a friend who was looking to pin down Shariy's daily whereabouts.

Fascist elements in Ukraine immediately celebrated news of Shariy's arrest on social media. Serhii Sternenko, a leader of the fascist Right Sector and prominent social media figure, quickly uploaded a YouTube video gloating over Shariy's detention abroad. He stated, "Shariy has been detained, and now all the other participants in the information war will be detained as well." As in all of Sternenko's video blogs, a portrait of the Ukrainian nationalist hero and World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera was strategically placed in the background.

Shariy initially fled Ukraine for Lithuania in 2012 because his investigations of government corruption during the presidency of the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich had led to his prosecution in Ukraine. After the February 2014 US-backed coup that ousted the Yanukovich government, he became a target of Ukraine's far-right. Opposing the civil war in eastern Ukraine, which was initiated by the right-wing Petro Poroshenko government, Shariy quickly gained popularity among Ukrainians who were skeptical of the war and the supposedly "democratic" pro-NATO government.

While Shariy himself has displayed a serious degree of political disorientation over the years — including homophobic and chauvinistic remarks — he has never

the less made a number of important reports on corruption, and the promotion of antisemitism, and far-right violent Ukrainian nationalism by the Ukrainian government.

Most notably, Shariy exposed the fact that the killers in the horrific acid attack and murder of anti-corruption activist Kateryna Handziuk in 2018 were members of the Right Sector battalion and that one of the attackers proudly sported neo-Nazi tattoos.

All of the attackers received light sentences of just 3-6 years for the political assassination. Following the beginning of full-scale war with Russia in February, Kiev despicably released the leader of Handziuk's murder, Sergey Torbin, and allowed him to pick other far-right inmates with military experience like himself to join in the NATO-provoked war against Russia.

Such revelations made Shariy both highly popular on social media and a target of the Poroshenko government which saw its own political support plummet to around 20 percent due to widespread disillusionment with corruption, poverty, and the never-ending civil war in Donbass that had claimed the lives of over 13,000 Ukrainians at the time.

In June 2019, Shariy announced the creation of his own "center-right libertarian" political party, which favored a negotiated settlement to end the ongoing civil war between Kiev and pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

The Party of Shariy initially supported the candidacy of the former comedian Volodymyr Zelensky who presented himself as a candidate of peace in opposition to the incumbent war monger Poroshenko. Shariy recently told MintPress News, "I thought he [Zelensky] was determined to follow up on his election promises. I helped him to become the president. It's true me and my team did anything for him to get the post."

However, Zelensky quickly exposed himself as a fraud. Basing himself just like Poroshenko on sections of the Ukrainian oligarchy and an alliance with imperialism, he doubled-down on the war in Eastern Ukraine by refusing to implement the Minsk peace accords and announcing a highly provocative "Crimea Platform" strategy to retake the Black Sea peninsula from Russia by any means.

The pro-war, NATO-friendly policies of Zelensky, like those of Poroshenko, required the support of Ukraine's far-right militias. As a result, members of

Shariy's party suffered a number of targeted political attacks following Zelensky's election.

In February of 2021, with Zelensky himself now facing the same rapidly declining popularity ratings as his predecessor Poroshenko, Shariy was first charged with "treason" and "spreading Russian propaganda."

At the time, Zelensky had also shut down three popular television stations associated with the pro-Russian Opposition Platform — For Life party and likewise began prosecution of party leader Viktor Medvedchuk for "treason."

While Zelensky is now hailed in the Western capitalist press as a modern-day Ukrainian George Washington, in January 2022 his popularity ratings stood at just 23 percent and there was widespread skepticism whether he would finish out his full presidency before forced early elections or another far-right orchestrated coup.

Now, the war is providing the basis for the Ukrainian government to completely eradicate political opposition and engage in an unprecedented promotion of the far-right. Making a mockery of the Western propaganda about the alleged defense of "democracy" in Ukraine, since the beginning of the war, the Zelensky government has arrested both Medvedchuk and Shariy, has outlawed 11 political opposition parties including Shariy's, and has provided de facto state-support for a widespread campaign of political arrests, lynchings and murders.

On Monday, May 9, the day of the anniversary of the end of World War II, President Zelensky shared a photo on Instagram and Telegram of a Ukrainian soldier sporting the Nazi "Totenkopf" (skull) insignia. This insignia was used during World War II by the 3rd SS Panzer Division, a unit of elite Nazi soldiers infamous for committing numerous war crimes. It is now a favorite symbol of neo-Nazis worldwide. The Ukrainian President has since deleted the image from his post.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact