

Oppose the state repression of the Union of Left forces in Ukraine!

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The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally denounces the state-led persecution of the Union of Left Forces - For a New Socialism party in Ukraine by the NATO-backed Zelensky-government. The Union of Left Forces is opposed to Ukraine's entry into NATO, insisting instead on a "neutral status" for the country, and has also opposed the Ukrainian government's decommunization laws that have been used to ban all symbols associated with communism and the Soviet Union. It also advocates the recognition of Russian as the second official language in Ukraine.

The WSWs has received submissions from the party's head, Maxim Goldarb, indicating a systematic campaign by the Ukrainian state aimed at destroying the party and intimidating and violently persecuting its members. The party was banned during the implementation of martial law in March 2022, along with 12 other opposition parties. Goldarb described the persecution of the party that followed this ban to the WSWs as follows:

In the spring of 2022, the founder of the party was extrajudicially detained and taken into custody. With regard to the leadership of the party, the secret service carried out illegal and extrajudicial operational-search measures for wiretapping, video surveillance, and illegal surveillance. On far-fetched charges, the chairman of the party was provocatively detained. As a result of such persecution, three out of five members of the political council of the party were forced to leave Ukraine. All leaders of regional party organizations were summoned to the special services for interrogation and pressure. The main office of the party in Kyiv in the spring of last year was hacked, party documentation disappeared from it.

The banning of the Union of Left Forces has been part of a campaign of state repression and terror unleashed by the Ukrainian state against all real and suspected opponents of the Zelensky government and the NATO proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. A central role in this campaign is played by the

Secret Service of Ukraine, the SBU, an organization that is notorious for its close ties to Ukraine's neo-Nazi scene and the use of torture and rape as methods of "interrogation." The SBU has carried out major raids and assassinations of politicians and figures associated with opposition to the pro-NATO government. Among those targeted were Mikhail and Alexander Kononovich, two leaders of the Ukrainian Communist Youth, who were arrested by the SBU in March 2022, imprisoned and tortured. They were only released in December 2022 and are now under house arrest.

The SBU is also systematically deployed to "hunt" for supposed collaborators with the Russian authorities in territories that were occupied by Russia but have since been re-taken by Ukraine. Many of those interrogated and terrorized by the SBU are local workers.

The far-right forces that have infested the SBU as well as the military and the police have been built up as shock troops of the NATO war and the government against the working class for years. Especially since the 2014 NATO-backed coup in Kiev that overthrew a pro-Russian government and led to an eight-year long civil war in East Ukraine, neo-Nazi forces were integrated into the state apparatus and army. With the support of Western governments and academics, the World War II-era Nazi collaborators from Stepan Bandera's Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which played a central role in the Holocaust, have been glorified as "national heroes," and monuments have been erected in their honor.

In a further measure aimed at escalating state repression of any opposition to the war, the Zelensky government at the beginning of this year passed a censorship law that has been described by European and Ukrainian associations of journalists as "the biggest threat to press freedom in (Ukraine's) independent history." The European Federation of Journalists described an earlier version of the bill as "worthy of the worst authoritarian regimes."

Describing the impact of this new law, Maxim Goldarb wrote:

Under the new law, the state regulator, the National

Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting, received unlimited opportunities to influence any media - from analysis and control over content to extrajudicial closure. So, for example, the National Council will create lists of banned media, form a “list of persons” who “pose a threat to the national media space of Ukraine” and who cannot be shown in the media, send instructions to media entities that are mandatory, and also control whether any “forbidden information” has been made public in the media. At the same time, the list of what it refers to as “forbidden information” is quite extensive and subjective, does not have clear criteria and, in fact, is determined by the National Council itself. In the same way, the National Council itself will determine what is “inaccurate information,” the dissemination of which will be considered a gross violation of the law, and for which sanctions will be applied.

All this is covered up by the “need to resist Russian aggression,” but there are no deadlines in the law. It will work now and will continue to operate after the end of the war.

Violators of the prohibitions face fines, revocation of licenses, cancellation of registration, temporary (for 14 days) or complete blocking of work.

Particularly harsh sanctions - extrajudicial blocking - threaten online media that will not be officially registered as mass media. They will be blocked even for minor (three times a month) violations or for two gross violations.

The National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting, contrary to its name, now regulates in Ukraine the activities of not only television and radio, but also print and even Internet media, including online cinemas or platforms with user-generated content, such as YouTube channels.

Describing the ever more repressive climate in the country, Goldarb continued:

The persecution of opposition politicians, journalists and public figures has intensified as never before. Many of them were forced to leave the country, and those who did not ended up in dungeons. Deputies of the opposition factions of the parliament are recklessly deprived of their deputy mandates, contrary to the Constitution and the will of the people who elected them. Moreover, in the secular state that is Ukraine, the authorities have launched repressive actions against the largest religious community in the country, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian special

service, the Security Service, conducts large-scale searches in Orthodox monasteries across the country, criminal cases are opened against priests, church premises and property are taken by force, illegal sanctions are imposed on church hierarchs, and a bill on banning the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is registered in Parliament. ... It’s no secret that behind every major business structure, behind every parliamentary faction, behind every top official, there is one or another oligarch. Over the past few years, the oligarchs - the people on the *Forbes* list from Ukraine - have steadily increased their fortunes and increased control over the country and its resources, mercilessly ruining them and its citizens. Now, having suffered financial losses due to hostilities, they decided to compensate for them by establishing absolute control over all financial flows without exception, whether it be military supplies, humanitarian aid, taxation, loans, international assistance for reconstruction, export earnings, utility tariffs, and so on. To do this, under the noise of war, the last obstacles to the establishment of an oligarchic dictatorship are harshly eliminated.

The Ukrainian Union of Left Forces — For a New Socialism party is affiliated with the Left Party in Germany and other organizations with whom the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International have well documented political differences. But this does not change in any way our principled opposition to the state persecution of the Union of Left Forces and other left-wing and oppositional organizations.

With its bans of and attacks on opposition parties, the Zelensky government is trying to suppress any opposition within the working class to its role as a proxy in NATO’s war against Russia, which threatens the population of the region and all of humanity with a nuclear catastrophe. It is the duty of all class-conscious workers and youth around the world to demand an immediate end to the state repression of the Union of Left Forces and all other left-wing and opposition parties in Ukraine.



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