

Ukraine updates its exemptions from the European Convention on Human Rights

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As it prepares for a new round of mass mobilization, the Ukrainian government has recently updated its ongoing exemptions from the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, according to the *Kyiv Independent*.

As a member of the Council of Europe, Ukraine is theoretically required to follow the articles of the Human Rights convention. However, it has been given the green light by its imperialist backers in the EU to suspend certain articles due to the war. Ukraine submitted the most recent appeal on April 4, but it was not made public until the end of the month.

According to media reports, the exemptions include human rights articles on “limitations on the political activities of foreigners,” “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion,” and “the right to an effective legal remedy,” as well as a number of articles related to the military.

A number of the most recent human rights conventions Ukraine is seeking permission to suspend involve the powers of the military to behave with dictatorial powers as it seeks to replenish some of the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers who have already been killed.

According to the *Kyiv Independent*, “These measures would include seizing property for the needs of the state, following the curfew, prohibiting peaceful mass events, and prohibiting residence changes for those who registered with the military or special registry, among other limitations.

“The military command is also allowed to inspect the belongings, vehicles, baggage, cargo, office premises, and citizens’ homes by the established procedure and implement the special regime for citizens, foreigners, and stateless persons, as well as vehicles’ movement.”

These measures are predictably defended by the representatives of Western imperialism. Peter Stano, an EU spokesperson, responded to questions by journalists on Ukraine’s deviations from the human rights conventions by essentially saying they were a non-issue for the EU.

“If we have a problem or potential problem with our Ukrainian partners, we discuss it.

“We do not assume that Ukrainian partners will act in bad faith. We fully understand the challenging circumstances they are facing. We have no reason to believe that they will take steps to violate their international obligations, values, and principles that are very important to the EU and the relations between Ukraine and the EU,” Stano said.

While the official NATO propaganda justifies this war as a fight to defend “democracy” against the “dictatorship” of Putin’s Russia, the exemptions granted by the EU to Ukraine on basic human and democratic rights are further proof that Ukraine is de facto a police state whose government resorts to dictatorial measures to suppress dissent.

The country of some 40 million originally imposed martial law on February 24, 2022 following the NATO-provoked invasion by Russia. The Ukrainian parliament has subsequently extended the measure several times at the request of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Currently, Ukrainian men aged between 18 and 60 are not permitted to leave the country, as they are subject to being forced into military service. Last week the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry announced it was suspending all consular services to military aged men in an attempt to bring some hundreds of thousands of men fleeing the war back to the country.

While the full-scale war and martial law has lasted over two years, Ukraine’s exemptions from European human rights conventions actually began in 2015 following the far-right coup of February 2014 which ousted the elected President Viktor Yanukovich and the outbreak of civil war in the country’s eastern Donbass region.

The newest update of exemptions comes as the country prepares to carry out a new round of mobilizations following the passage of a widely opposed new mobilization bill that seeks to conscript hundreds of thousands of new soldiers into the severely undermanned Ukrainian Armed Forces. Moreover, with the recent passage of a \$61 billion military assistance aid package from the United States, there is an urgent need to conscript more soldiers so that the expected influx of weapons can actually be used.

The 2024 mobilization drive was first proposed in Zelensky's end-of-the-year address in December, when he announced that the Ukrainian Armed Forces were hoping to mobilize 500,000 new soldiers at a cost of \$13.3 billion. Following widespread opposition, an initial mobilization bill was withdrawn and then reintroduced in February, ultimately leading to the bill's passage.

With the bill's passage, all men aged 18 to 60 will be required to update their personal information within the next 60 days with the authorities responsible for conscription. This also goes for Ukrainian citizens living abroad, which now number in the millions, given the refugees from the war. As Maxim Goldarb reported to the WSW:

People who fail to comply with the requirements of the new law can be deprived of the right to drive a car, forcibly detained by the police and taken to the TCR, and fined. At the same time, the filing of an appeal by a citizen against a court decision on his punishment does not suspend the effect of the appealed decision! This is an obvious legal absurdity, the consequence of which will be the shattered fates of people due to what are often unlawful and, moreover, unenforceable judicial decisions: In essence, this law has abrogated the right to a fair trial and the right to file an appeal!

Moreover, without a military ID card, military conscripts will not be issued a passport abroad. This also applies to young men who are 18 or older and who had been able to leave Ukraine even before coming of age. That is, in order to be able to receive Ukrainian documents abroad, they will have to go back to Ukraine for a military registration document. But since they won't be allowed to leave Ukraine again after that, this makes no sense. Moreover, in the new law it is stipulated that not only passports, but also all consular services abroad for all men from 18 to 60 years of age will be provided only upon presentation of a military ID card. Thus, for tens of thousands of Ukrainians who do not have military IDs, obtaining consular services has become impossible without returning to Ukraine.

The final version of the bill passed also does not include a provision for the demobilization of men after three years of service, which was removed at the last minute by request of newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Oleksandr Syrsky. This means that even those men who have fought at the front for two years will be forced to

remain in service indefinitely. Since the fall, the wives and families of soldiers, who in many cases have been fighting on the front for over two years, have been protesting in major Ukrainian cities to demand that their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers be allowed to return home.

It is under conditions of these growing anti-war sentiments and an intense military crisis that the Ukrainian ruling class moves to abolish whatever has remained of democratic rights in Ukraine. All men and youth are to be forced into the meat grinder of the war, while any expression of anti-war and socialist sentiments is to be brutally repressed. This dynamic is demonstrated most starkly by the recent arrest of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a socialist internationalist opponent of the war.

The updated exemptions of Ukraine from the European human rights convention with the full agreement of the EU underscore two fundamental points that the World Socialist Web Site raised in calling for Bogdan Syrotiuk's release: First, that his life is in danger, given the horrendous conditions prevailing in Ukrainian prisons and the lack of basic human and democratic rights. And, second, that "The Biden administration and its counterparts in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome and the other capitals involved in the direction of the proxy war are no less responsible for the fate of Bogdan Syrotiuk than their agents in Kiev." The imperialist powers are not only funding and escalating the war, but are also de facto endorsing and overseeing the implementation of ever more openly dictatorial measures by Kiev in order to enforce its continuation.

This lends the campaign for Bogdan Syrotiuk's release the greatest urgency. All readers of the WSW who have not yet signed the petition should do so today.



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