Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee in Australia demands the release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our correspondents
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The Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee (HWRFC) in Australia has added its voice to the international campaign demanding the Zelensky government drop its frame-up charges against Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk and immediately release him.

Bogdan, 25, who is leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist youth organisation active in Ukraine and Russia, was arrested by the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU) on April 25. He was charged with treason and being an agent of the Putin government and is currently incarcerated in atrocious conditions in a Nikolaev prison.

Bogdan and the YGBL are unwavering socialist opponents of the Zelensky government and the NATO-instigated war between Russia and Ukraine, and fight for the socialist unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against the capitalist oligarchs in both countries.

The SBU allegations are crude lies and fabrications. The arrest is the latest evidence of the Zelensky regime's suppression of left-wing movements whose resistance to the war is gaining traction among Ukrainian workers and youth.

After hearing a report on Bogdan's arrest and imprisonment at an HWRFC meeting earlier this month, those present unanimously pledged to campaign among health workers for his freedom. The meeting, which was attended by a range of medical professionals, including nurses, doctors, pathologists, medical scientists and hospital ancillary workers, passed the following resolution:

This meeting of the HWRFC demands the immediate freedom of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. Syrotiuk is 25 and in poor health. He was arrested by the Security Service of Ukraine on fraudulent charges of serving the interests of Russia. In fact, Bogdan is an intransigent opponent of the capitalist Putin regime and its invasion of Ukraine. He opposes the NATO-instigated Ukraine-Russia war and fights for the unity of the working class in Ukraine, Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union.

If found guilty by a kangaroo court, Syrotiuk is threatened with a prison sentence of 15 years to life. The arrest is the latest example of the fascistic Ukrainian regime of Volodymyr Zelensky brutally suppressing left-wing and anti-war voices.

The HWRFC demands the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk. We resolve to campaign among health workers as part of the global fight for his freedom. This struggle is an essential component of the fight against imperialist war, genocide and dictatorship.

Acting on this resolution, HWRFC members have been alerting their fellow workers on social media about Bogdan's arrest, explaining what it reveals about the dictatorial nature of the Zelensky regime, and the necessity for workers everywhere to demand his release.

Over the past week the HWRFC has received statements from two Queensland doctors, including a video-reel from Dr Zewlan Moor, a medical scientist, and Suphor Samurtharb, convenor of the Pathology Workers Rank-and-File Safety Committee.

Dr Moor is one of scores of doctors and other health workers in Australia who have been targeted by Zionists elements for opposing Israel's genocidal attacks on Palestinians in Gaza. At least 39 health workers are currently being investigated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency after being falsely accused of antisemitism.

Moor's video outlines the necessity for health workers to fight for the release of Bogdan and its connection to the struggle against the Gaza genocide, imperialist war and attacks on freedom of speech.

Gary Alvernia, a Queensland doctor, sent the following statement:

"As a health-worker I oppose the arrest, and demand the freedom of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a principled socialist and courageous opponent of the war in Ukraine. Bogdan is a young man whose political work as a Trotskyist has been centred on

the building of an anti-war movement of both Ukrainian and Russian workers, in cooperation with their counterparts all over the world.

"That he has been imprisoned and threatened with a possible life sentence, despite his poor health, is cruel and makes a mockery of any supposed pretensions of democracy that Zelensky and his backers in the US and Europe claim to support. That he has been slandered as a supporter of the Putin regime to justify his arrest is outrageous and absurd.

"The persecution of Bogdan is an attack against the basic rights and lives of all working people and all those fighting against imperialist war. He opposes a war that has slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people from both Ukraine and Russia, fuelled and instigated by the NATO powers. This war, if not stopped by the working class, threatens a nuclear war and a catastrophe almost unimaginable.

"And it is not only Ukraine where anti-war opposition is suppressed. Like Bogdan, thousands of youth in America and Europe have been arrested for opposing genocide in Gaza, while the Netanyahu government of Israel whose leaders are considered war criminals by the ICC are able to commit atrocities with impunity. If principled fighters for working people like Bogdan are arrested with impunity, the workers of the world will have no leadership to oppose the horrors of war and genocide.

"The repression of Bogdan is a repression against us all. I know I speak for many workers when I say, free Bogdan! Now is the time to speak out, rally your workplaces, communities, and families to this cause, and support the *World Socialist Web Site* campaign to demand his freedom."

Suphor Samurtharb, who is convenor of the Pathology Workers Rank-and-File Safety Committee in Australia, sent the following statement:

"I call on pathology workers and all workers who want to defend democratic rights to support the global campaign to demand the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk from a Ukrainian prison. This is an urgent life and death question. He is the victim of a heinous state frame-up.

"Defending Bogdan entails opposing the international corporate media's never-ending pro-war narrative that the NATO-backed battle with Russia is being fought to protect democracy and human rights. Ukraine is a police state under martial law with opposition parties outlawed.

"To impose its ruthless program of war and austerity, the Zelensky administration and its capitalist government supporters around the world are rejecting the entire foundation of legal and democratic rights with unconscionable hypocrisy.

"While Western governments, aided and abetted by a subservient corporate media, claim they defend democratic rights, they are repudiating these basic rights. This is seen in the indefinite imprisonment of Julian Assange in Britain's Belmarsh Prison and the inhumane incarceration of refugees in detention camps in Australia and around the world.

"Medical practitioners who have spoken out in Australia against Israeli war crimes have been threatened and intimidated by local Zionists who have utilised the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency complaints process to make false claims of antisemitism. University students are being arrested and their future threatened for opposing genocide.

"I urge health workers, students and all workers to support our campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk, end the war in Ukraine and the Gaza genocide, and to take up a socialist anti-war program to end all war."

David McGregor, a respiratory scientist from regional New South Wales wrote:

"The arrest and incarceration of Bogdan Syrotiuk by the fascist Zelensky government in Ukraine is a dishonest and criminal act that should be a warning to the working class internationally. Its purpose is to silence him and the perspective of international socialism, which is a direct threat to the nationalist and imperialist objectives of the US and NATO. These reactionary forces cannot tolerate the possibility of any perspective that unifies the Ukrainian and Russian working class to put an end to this war.

"The accusation that Bogdan is an agent of the Putin government lacks truth and evidence. Bogdan's actions were clear, that is, to rally the Ukrainian and Russian working class in a unified struggle on a socialist program against the reactionary capitalist regimes in both countries. The war has cost the lives of thousands of soldiers on both sides, with more and more Ukrainians being rounded up to fight and die to further the interests of US imperialism and its allies. This to the satisfaction of Washington and NATO, who are now preparing to offset the Ukrainian military defeats with NATO troops on the ground, building the real threat of an escalated war directly against Russia that could trigger a world war with nuclear weapons.

"The socialist program Bogdan advocates is for a unified struggle against war and for the abolition of capitalism, its cause. This is the fight that the international working class must take up to prevent a third world war. The call for the release of Bogdan, with the weight of the international working class unified behind it, is of vital importance and must succeed."

We urge health workers, students and every other section of the working class to support this campaign, sign the petition and get involved by visiting wsws.org/freebogdan.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact