

Educators in the US demand: Free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk at once!

Educators Rank-and-File Committee (US)
24 May 2024

The World Socialist Web Site and the International Committee of the Fourth International have launched a global campaign demanding Syrotiuk's freedom. Sign the online petition [here](#).

The Educators Rank-and-File Committee (ERFC US) demands the immediate release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, age 25, from prison.

Bogdan is a political prisoner who was arrested on April 25 by the far-right Zelensky government for his opposition to the bloody war in Ukraine, directed by the US and NATO, against Russia.

He has been framed up on fraudulent charges of being an agent of the Putin regime.

As a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist youth organization in the former Soviet Union, Bogdan's political opposition to the war is based on the fight to unite the working class in Russia and Ukraine in a common struggle against the US-NATO-backed fascistic government of Ukraine and the nationalist oligarchy that rules Russia.

Court documents show the charges against Bogdan are directed above all at the *World Socialist Web Site*, the publication of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which they slander as a "Russian propaganda and information agency." This is a preposterous lie, thoroughly refuted by every article and statement published on the website since the start of the war in February 2022.

This is an attack not just against Bogdan but against workers and young people throughout the world who are fighting against war, repression and exploitation.

Teachers in the US have an obligation to defend him, as we—and our students—also face mounting attacks on our democratic rights. This is especially true of the growing movement against the US-backed genocide in Gaza, which has faced a brutal, bi-partisan police state

crackdown aimed at banning the right to protest war in the US.

We urge striking academic workers at the University of California, along with students and the professors who have courageously defended them, to raise the defense of Bogdan in your strike to stop the police repression on campus. Sign the petition and issue a statement in his defense! Demand your unions and organizations issue statements as well!

The persecution of Bogdan rests on the criminalization of free thought and speech. It exposes all of the propaganda of the Biden administration and its allies in NATO that the war against Russia represents a defense of "democracy" in Ukraine. Even the American State Department has detailed the utterly repressive character of its proxy regime.

The genocide in Gaza, as horrible as it is, is only one front in an emerging World War III spanning from Ukraine to the Middle East and China. The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Charles Q. Brown told the *New York Times* last week that a deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine was "inevitable," raising the danger of nuclear war.

We, the working class, will be made to pay for these wars both with our lives and our livelihoods.

Money is being sucked out of education to pay for war. School districts everywhere are faced with a staggering fiscal cliff, leading to school closures, program cuts and mass layoffs. An estimated 384,000 full-time education jobs are on the line. Similar attacks on jobs and wages are being carried out against workers in auto, logistics, healthcare and other industries.

Yet both parties joined hands earlier this year to pass the largest ever military budget, \$825 billion, and in April, Biden signed an additional \$95 billion for military funding to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan.

The union bureaucracy is a key ally in the war effort, who stumps for war while trying to prevent strikes and other forms of social opposition among workers at home.

American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten is a key figure in the war drive. A member of the Democratic National Committee, she has slandered Gaza protests as antisemitic. At the same time, she has made repeated visits to Eastern Europe where she has met with open neo-Nazis aligned with the US against Russia.

Her actions are in complete defiance of the will of the rank-and-file which opposes war, the burden of which will fall heaviest on our students. Teachers must call the AFT bureaucracy to account and countermand this warmongering, which is being financed with our dues money. The rank and file must organize now to demand that the unions cease their support for the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and issue calls for Bogdan's release.

The fight against war must be linked with mass actions, including strikes and sickouts, to halt the police crackdown on campuses, which the AFT and NEA have also done nothing to stop. If they refuse to wage a real struggle, we must take the initiative out of their hands. This begins with organizing rank-and-file committees in each school to fight for our demands.

An Alabama teacher and ERFC member commented,

Teachers in the US need to realize that the system that is feeding this war in Ukraine is the same system that is making it impossible to live here. Money that would resolve education and budget cuts is being directed to war. The funding we should be receiving for better schools, better pay, a better economy, is being diverted.

When we stand with Bogdan, we are fighting for ourselves too. They're holding him in prison for crimes that aren't real because he was just reporting on what he saw, just like our students here are protesting what they see happening in Gaza and being attacked for it. His rights and the rights of students are being violated, all because they went against the capitalist system.

The fight to defend democratic rights and to stop war depends upon the working class across the US and internationally building a unified movement against war and repression.



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