

Ukrainian government bans *World Socialist Web Site*

Eric London
6 June 2024

On Monday, June 3, the Ukrainian government banned the *World Socialist Web Site* across the country, issuing an order commanding all internet service providers to block access to the WSWs indefinitely.

The order was issued by the Ukrainian State Special Communications Service (SSSCIP), a wing of the country's military-intelligence apparatus. It instructs "providers of electronic communication networks and/or services to implement access restriction (block access) on own recursive DNS servers to domain name (as well as its subdomains) wsws.org."

The order has no end date and will last "until the termination or abolition of martial law in Ukraine." The SSSCIP claims the ban is justified under President Volodymyr Zelensky's February 24, 2022 declaration of martial law, which suspended democratic rights across the country.

The order banning access to the *World Socialist Web Site* exposes as lies all claims that the US-led war in Ukraine is being waged in the name of "democracy." Yesterday, US President Joe Biden spoke at a commemoration of D-Day in Normandy and presented the war as "a struggle between dictatorship and freedom." The reality is Ukraine is a dictatorship where the government is politically dependent on fascists who idolize the Holocaust. The government brutally persecutes opponents of its war and blatantly suppresses free speech.

The decision to ban the WSWs is a response to the outpouring of support within Ukraine and internationally for Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 25-year-old socialist internationalist who was arrested by the Zelensky regime on April 25 on trumped up charges of "high treason" for writing articles for the WSWs, which SBU prosecutors (Ukraine's domestic intelligence agency) deceitfully claim is "Russian propaganda." Syrotiuk and the organization to which he belongs, the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), are Trotskyists and irreconcilable opponents of the US-NATO war against Russia as well as the capitalist government of Vladimir Putin.

There is compelling evidence that the Ukrainian government's decision to ban the WSWs was made in consultation with the Biden administration.

The Ukrainian State Special Communications Service—the institution from which the order to ban the WSWs derived—is a long-term partner of the United States government. In July 2022, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA, a component of the Department of Homeland Security) signed an agreement with SSSCIP "to strengthen collaboration on shared cybersecurity priorities," which "expands upon CISA's existing relationship with the government of Ukraine."

CISA Director Jen Easterly said the agreement "allowed us to really focus on how do we effectively share information, best practices, exercise together, train together, figure out how to hunt for adversary activity."

In documents outlining the bogus charges against Syrotiuk, the Ukrainian government references an "investigation" of the WSWs conducted by the Center for Countering Disinformation (CCD), a wing of the Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. According to the prosecuting documents, the CCD conducted an "analysis of publications posted on the WSWs.org resource ... according to which the essence of the damage caused by [Syrotiuk] to the information security of Ukraine was established."

There is not a shred of evidence to support the claim that Syrotiuk or the WSWs are supporters of the Russian government. On the contrary, the prosecuting documents rely entirely on articles by Syrotiuk and the WSWs denouncing the US-NATO war, exposing the role of fascists in the Ukrainian government, warning of the danger of nuclear escalation and calling for the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working class against both governments. Included among the "evidence" cited by the Ukrainian authorities as proof of Syrotiuk's guilt is literature found in his apartment authored by Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky and WSWs International Editorial Board Chairperson David North.

The Center for Countering Disinformation also has the

closest ties to American and British imperialism. According to an October 2022 article by Global Risk Insights:

Ukraine’s Center for Countering Disinformation ...grew out of initiatives spearheaded ... by the State Department’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). The OTI’s Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative II partnered with a broad-based coalition, including the [US State Department’s Global Engagement Center’s] sister organization, the USAGM [US Agency for Global Media], as well as the UK’s Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. This effort allowed Ukraine to “stand-up” its counter-disinformation departments nearly a full year prior to the Russian invasion.

Notably, the Pentagon’s Central Command issued a report earlier this year referring to upcoming efforts by the US Agency for Global Media to conduct “market research and national surveys” and determine the power of “disinformation” in Ukraine and internationally. According to the Pentagon, “the projects’ research methods include focus groups, media monitoring panels, and national surveys” to “examine the impact” of anti-war sentiments in Ukraine, which they label as the product of “disinformation.”

This research was conducted from “March to May 2024,” the period including Syrotiuk’s arrest and immediately leading up to the decision to ban the WSWS. This period has seen a substantial growth of opposition to the war against Russia within Ukraine, which authorities fear is coinciding with a growth in the readership of the WSWS and growing awareness of and opposition to the prosecution of Syrotiuk.

In an April 30 statement issued following Syrotiuk’s arrest, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North explained:

The arrest of Bogdan is the latest example of the Zelensky regime’s brutal repression of left-wing movements, whose opposition to the war is finding a growing response within the Ukrainian working class.

Efforts by the Ukrainian government to portray Syrotiuk and the WSWS as pro-Putin “are politically preposterous,” North wrote.

In political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the YGBL opposes the oligarchic capitalist governments in both Ukraine and Russia. In numerous articles posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* and in speeches delivered at events sponsored by the ICFI, Bogdan has unequivocally condemned the war and called for the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian working class against the reactionary national-chauvinist regimes headquartered in Kiev and Moscow. His comrades in Russia unequivocally oppose the capitalist restorationist regime of Putin and its delusional glorification of neo-tsarist Russian nationalism.

The campaign to free Syrotiuk has garnered widespread international attention, and the International Committee has established a defense committee to coordinate the global campaign demanding his freedom. A video published on Twitter/X by North has been viewed well over 150,000 times, and thousands of people from across the world have signed the petition demanding Syrotiuk’s release. Prominent artists, political groups, journalists and public figures have called on the Ukrainian government to liberate Syrotiuk and drop all charges against him.

The WSWS urges all readers to sign and circulate the petition demanding Syrotiuk’s liberation (at wsws.org/freebogdan), to contact the WSWS and become active in the campaign to oppose the widening assault on freedom of speech, and to issue statements condemning the prosecution and the decision to ban the WSWS.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact