

Ukrainian secret service SBU arrests anti-war youth in multiple cities

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On January 28, the Ukrainian secret service SBU arrested Ukrainian youth and workers who oppose the ongoing forced mobilization of young men into the NATO proxy war against Russia. The *World Socialist Web Site*, the organ of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), demands the immediate release of the prisoners. Their lives are in danger. The prisons in Ukraine are notorious for torture and inhumane conditions, and the SBU is known for its close ties to neo-Nazis. Photos released by the SBU from the raids indicate that abuse of the arrested has already taken place.

Information about the arrests was first circulated by a family member of one of the victims of the SBU raid. On a Telegram channel, they reported:

On the morning of January 28, many young people with anti-war and anti-fascist beliefs were searched and detained in Ukraine. They are charged with involvement in the organization Workers' Front of Ukraine and Article 114-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Obstruction of the lawful activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations). Article 114-1 is the article under which those who oppose the violent mobilization in Ukraine are judged: from administrators of Telegram channels with posts about the arbitrariness of the TCR [Territorial Center for Recruitment and Social Support, the agency that enacts the mobilization] to people with political views opposed to the current system.

In an official press release from February 1, the Kiev City Prosecutor's Office stated that it had arrested members of an "underground communist organization, who disrupted mobilization and called for not donating to the armed forces." Arrests took place in Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, and the Poltava and Kharkiv (Kharkov) regions. The Prosecutor's Office charges the youth with adhering to "Marxist and communist ideology." According to the allegations, they distributed leaflets in several cities and ran social media channels encouraging people

to think that there is no need to defend Ukraine, saying that someone else should do it. Similarly, [the youth argued that] there is no need to raise money for drones, thermal imagers, or other assistance to the military. In their posts, the authors also used emotional statements, allegedly by women, to argue that no one is obliged to fight, thus trying to disrupt the mobilization and persuading the wives of those liable for military service to resist mobilization [and] convincing their husbands to evade service.

Another Telegram channel, Dialektik, reported on February 3:

According to the investigation, the arrested persons set up underground printing houses and distributed leaflets urging civilians to evade mobilization and military personnel to join soldiers' committees and desert. During the

searches, equipment and communist literature were seized. Published photos show facial injuries and plastic ties on the hands instead of handcuffs, which in itself is regarded as torture because blood does not flow to the hand in full. The detainees are students and workers at local businesses. They are all accused of obstructing the activities of the AFU [Ukrainian Armed Forces] (Article 114-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). The activists face up to 15 years in prison.

The photos released by the SBU show that the confiscated literature includes volumes of Karl Marx's *Capital* and a volume with Lenin's works *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *State and Revolution*.

The case against these youth gives an indication of the immense popular opposition to the NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Now almost in its fourth year, it is estimated that the war has claimed the lives of well over half a million Ukrainian workers and youth, with many more wounded or crippled for life. Thousands are regularly kidnapped off the streets and forced into the "meat grinder" at the front. Especially over the past year, desertions have reached enormous proportions.

The Zelensky regime, armed and funded by the imperialist powers, has only been able to impose this war on the Ukrainian population through an escalating crackdown on all left-wing opposition to the war. In the first days after the invasion by Russia, the regime banned 13 major opposition parties. Among them was the Ukrainian Union of Left Forces—For a New Socialism Party, whose head, Maxim Goldarb, had to flee the country. In a tacit acknowledgement of the politically repressive character of a regime it has been arming with billions in weapons, the European Union in January granted Maxim Goldarb international protection.

On April 25, 2024, the SBU arrested the Ukrainian Trotskyist youth Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL). He has been charged with "state treason under martial law," which carries a prison sentence of between 15 years to life in prison. In political solidarity with the ICFI, the

YGBL has opposed the war in Ukraine from a socialist standpoint, fighting to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers with the working class in Europe and America.

As of March 2024, there were at least 55,000 political prisoners in Ukraine who were detained as "collaborators" by the SBU, according to the United Nations. This number will have no doubt increased significantly over the past year.

The latest arrests of anti-war youth underscore not only the brutal character of the NATO war and the dictatorial nature of the Zelensky regime in Ukraine. They also show that significant sections of workers and youth are seeking to find the path forward on a socialist basis. The fight for their release, that of Bogdan Syrotiuk and all other political prisoners in Ukraine, is an indispensable and urgent component of the struggle against an emerging third imperialist world war.



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