

European Court of Human Rights accepts case of imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

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The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg has accepted the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Syrotiuk's lawyers have based their complaint on the fact that Syrotiuk's arrest on April 25, 2024 was in violation of his basic right to liberty. They argue that Bogdan, who was 25 and in poor health at the time of his arrest, at no point constituted a danger to society, had no prior criminal record, and was arrested purely for the expression of his political beliefs.

Bogdan was charged with "high treason under martial law," which carries a sentence of between 15 years and life in prison. In fact, Bogdan, as a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, is a fighter for the unity of the working class in Ukraine, Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union against the present war and in political opposition to both the Zelensky and Putin regimes.

All court decisions regarding Bogdan's arrest and the seizure of his property were issued in language that was, with minor variations, identical to the requests by the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU), which carried out the investigation and arrest. Bogdan has now been held in an overcrowded prison in Nikolaev for 15 months. He was only recently granted urgently needed dental treatment.

The acceptance of the case by the court is an important step in the campaign to demand the release of Bogdan. It is worth stressing that the court, as an institution of European imperialism, has close ties to the Ukrainian ruling class and accepts cases against Ukraine only when the most egregious violations are undeniable.

In an indication of the severity and scope of the violations of human and democratic rights in Ukraine,

the country ranks among the top three countries in terms of the number of applications before the ECHR. Every year it accounts for over 15 percent of all cases lodged. However, the ECHR accepts only a small minority of complaints and delivers a final judgement in an even smaller portion.

In recent years, in 99 percent of its judgements, the ECHR found the Ukrainian government to be in violation of at least one article of the European Convention on Human Rights. Apart from the non-payment of welfare, among the most frequent complaints are unfair trials, arbitrary or lengthy pretrial detention, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, restriction on freedom of assembly and abuses of the right to liberty and security of person.

In March, the ECHR ruled in favor of 25 relatives of victims of the 2015 fascist massacre in Odessa. Even in a ruling that was filled with anti-Russian war propaganda, the ECHR was compelled to find that the Ukrainian state had effectively abetted the arson attack by allowing it to happen and subsequently helping to cover it up. 48 people were killed in the attack and 200 were injured. The Ukrainian government was ordered to pay the victims of the massacre.

In a June ruling, the ECHR found that the Ukrainian government had violated the prohibition of inhumane and degrading treatment and the right to an effective remedy by denying the imprisoned Oleksiy Benyukh effective dental treatment in detention. During his detention, Benyukh had all of his teeth extracted for medical reasons, causing both significant pain and humiliation. Yet despite a medical diagnosis in 2019, he was denied free dentures for 19 months. Although the treatment was prescribed even by Ukrainian law, it

was only through an NGO dentist that Benyukh received dentures in 2021.

These cases give a faint glimpse of the forces that Bogdan Syrotiuk is up against and the dangers to which he is subject.

It must be stressed that the complete subordination of the court system to the government and the emboldening of neo-Nazi forces have reached an entirely new level, qualitatively and quantitatively, since the Russian invasion of February 2022 and the transformation of Ukraine into a direct military proxy for NATO's war against Russia. Tens of thousands of workers and young people as well as journalists have been imprisoned on bogus charges. Some have died in detention, including the American-Chilean pro-Russian journalist, Gonzalo Lira who was denied necessary medical treatment. It is therefore a vital necessity that the campaign to free Bogdan now be expanded and that maximum pressure be exerted on the ECHR to review and rule on his case as quickly as possible.

By any legal standards, the case against him should have already been dropped and Bogdan released. The only "evidence" cited by the prosecution in its indictment are articles Bogdan wrote and translated for the *World Socialist Web Site*, and pamphlets and statements by the International Committee of the Fourth International. This was not "state treason," but the exercise of his basic right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought. The claim by the prosecution that the *World Socialist Web Site* is a "Russian propaganda and information agency" is a transparent lie, disproven by the entire documentary record that the prosecution tries to use to indict Bogdan.

In several sessions before a Ukrainian court in Bogdan's hometown of Pervomaisk since January, the prosecution has failed to bolster its case. In a court session on June 25, the prosecution invited an expert and a former comrade of Bogdan, both of whom failed to provide evidence for the charges of "state treason." During the session, one of Bogdan's lawyers was not admitted to the proceedings via video. She has since issued a complaint since this clearly violated her right to question the prosecution's witnesses.

Further evidence of an unfair trial emerged in the last session on July 22, when the court rejected a request by one of Bogdan's lawyers to provide him with a translator to translate into Russian the court

proceedings, which are held in Ukrainian. Russian is the main language Bogdan has used since his childhood.

The WSWs re-issues its call upon its readers and all supporters of democratic rights and opponents of war to fight for the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk.

- Sign the petition and donate to the campaign!
- Circulate information about the case as widely as possible!
- Demand that the ECHR expedite its review of the case of Bogdan and other political prisoners of the Zelensky regime!
- For the immediate release of Bogdan and all political prisoners!



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