

Expand the campaign to free the imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk!

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The European Court of Human Rights' (ECHR) decision to admit the case of imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk marks an important step forward in the fight to secure his release.

Bogdan, the founder and leader of the Trotskyist youth group Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), has been imprisoned since April 2024 on charges of "state treason." If convicted, he faces 15 years to life in prison. His sole "crime" is opposing the proxy war in Ukraine. In a statement written just days before his arrest, which he had intended to deliver at an international May Day rally, Bogdan declared:

On this day of international working class solidarity, we, the members of the Ukrainian branch of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists and the entire YGBL, call for the unification of the Ukrainian and Russian proletariat with the proletariat of the imperialist countries to end this war!

While opposing the invasion of Ukraine by the capitalist Putin regime, Bogdan and the YGBL have insisted that the Kiev regime is a puppet of US and European imperialism. Fraudulently claiming to be defending Ukrainian self-determination, the Zelensky government is waging a proxy war that was provoked by NATO in order to weaken Russia and create conditions for its eventual carve up. As for democracy, martial law prevails in Ukraine. Zelensky, whose legal term as president expired in May 2024, rules as a dictator in violation of the Ukrainian constitution.

In order to continue the war, the constant "mobilization" drives are enforced by kidnapping men

off the streets. Neo-Nazi formations operate freely within the armed forces and have infested every aspect of the Ukrainian government and state apparatus.

All the justifications that are advanced in support of this war reek of hypocrisy and lies. All the NATO powers that instigated the war are simultaneously supporting Israel's genocidal onslaught on the Gazan people.

Bogdan and the YGBL, which has members and supporters throughout the former USSR, have consistently opposed both the Putin and the Zelensky regimes, insisting that the war can only be stopped through the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian working class.

Bogdan's lawyers brought the case before the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds of the unlawful nature of his arrest. Bogdan, who is now 26 years old, was detained and imprisoned solely for his political views, a blatant violation of his right to freedom of speech and thought.

But the violations of the European Convention of Human Rights did not end here. The court rulings show that it has routinely ruled in favor of the prosecution, the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU), by simply copying the language of the SBU. Bogdan's right to a legal defense was severely undermined through the intimidation of multiple lawyers. In the last two court sessions alone, one of his lawyers was effectively deprived of the right to examine the witnesses of the prosecution, and Bogdan's request for an interpreter was rejected.

Thousands of workers and young people have been imprisoned by Zelensky on bogus charges for their opposition to war, austerity and fascism. Over a dozen political parties that oppose the war, such as the "For a New Socialism" party led by Maxim Goldarb, have

been banned, their offices raided and leaders arrested or driven into exile.

Bogdan was arrested amid growing opposition to the war. According to a recent poll, 70 percent of Ukrainians think that their leaders are using the war to enrich themselves. Nearly half, 47 percent, said they believe that “Ukraine will be a depopulated country with a ruined economy” 10 years from now.

In Russia, too, opposition to the war has been growing. The oligarchic Putin regime has responded by expanding censorship and the arrest of critics of the war, and by whipping up ever more ferocious Great-Russian chauvinism.

Only a small portion of the cases lodged against the Ukrainian government have been accepted by the European Court of Human Rights, a key legal institution of European imperialism. The court rules in an even smaller portion of cases. In almost all of them, however, it has found violations of the European Convention of Human Rights. The fact that the ECHR has now accepted the case speaks to the egregious nature of the violations of Bogdan’s rights and the effectiveness of the campaign launched by the ICFI for his release.

The ECHR’s admission of Bogdan’s case is an important initial victory, but even if it rules in Bogdan’s favor the process can take many years. This is time Bogdan does not have. He suffers from ill health, and his medical treatment in prison has been poor and delayed.

Bogdan’s fate depends on the determined mobilization of the broadest possible support within the working class, youth and progressively minded intellectuals and artists. At stake is not only Bogdan’s life, but the most vital interests of the working class throughout the world.

In the 15 months since Bogdan’s arrest it has become ever clearer that, to the imperialist powers, the war in Ukraine was the opening shot in an imperialist redivision of the entire world. In the Middle East, they have been funding and arming Israel’s genocide of the Palestinian population. In June, Israel and the US bombed Iran. Feverish preparations are underway for an even larger conflict with China. The mass slaughter in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza are the testing grounds for the horrors imperialism is prepared to inflict upon the working class everywhere.

The imperialist regimes in Western Europe are escalating the war and state openly that the massive increase in military spending is preparation for a coming war with Russia.

For the ruling class, Bogdan’s arrest is a component of its reckless militarism and political repression of growing opposition. For the working class, the fight to free Bogdan is an essential component of the fight to defend democratic rights and oppose imperialist war and fascism.

We therefore call upon all readers of the WSWS, supporters of democratic rights and opponents of imperialist war to expand the campaign to free Bogdan.

- Demand that the ECHR expedite the review of Bogdan’s case!
- Sign and circulate the petition demanding his immediate release! Make his case known as widely as possible!
- Submit statements and get involved in the campaign!
- Make a substantial donation to the campaign for his release!
- Fight to build a socialist anti-war movement!



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