

Defend Ukrainian Holocaust scholar Marta Havryshko!

James Clayton
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The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns the vicious and life-threatening political witch hunt targeting Dr. Marta Havryshko, a scholar of the Nazi Holocaust. Havryshko has come under attack by the Ukrainian state, its intelligence agencies, neo-Nazi forces, and their supporters in academia. Her life and the safety of her family are in serious danger because her research has challenged the far-right nationalist forces that have been systematically cultivated for the NATO proxy war against Russia. Workers, youth and progressive intellectuals must come to her defense.

The campaign against Havryshko—which includes professional retaliation, public denunciations, and death and rape threats—exposes as a pack of lies the claims by the imperialist powers that the Ukrainian state is fighting for “democracy” and “freedom.” In reality, the government is a deeply reactionary regime riddled with fascists.

On July 13, Dr. Havryshko, a refugee since 2022, was summarily dismissed from her position at the Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies, part of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. This decision violated her official status as a scholar on “unpaid leave until the end of martial law,” a protection nominally guaranteed to all Ukrainian academic refugees. Havryshko currently serves as Visiting Assistant Professor in Holocaust Pedagogy and Antisemitism Studies at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Massachusetts.

On July 22, the journal *New Global Politics* published “An Open Letter in Defence of Academic Freedom,” signed by dozens of academics and journalists. The letter denounces Havryshko’s dismissal as retaliation for her political criticism of the Ukrainian far right:

This case exemplifies a dangerous political dynamic in which critique of far-right ideologies and ethnonationalism is rebranded as a “national security threat,” thereby legitimizing persecution and censorship. Academic freedom, freedom of speech, and scholarly integrity must not be subordinated to political or geopolitical loyalties. Their only legitimate standards are intellectual honesty and analytical rigor.

The letter was signed by several of the most eminent scholars of the Holocaust and the crimes of fascism in Ukraine, including John-Paul Himka and Grzegorz Rossoli?ski-Liebe. David North, the chairperson of the *World Socialist Web Site*, also signed the letter.

Havryshko, working within the framework of identity politics, previously authored a book of stories about women who served in the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. She has also delivered multiple presentations detailing accounts of sexual violence against Ukrainian women following Russia’s reactionary 2022 invasion. Her book on the OUN has been branded “extremist literature” by the Russian government.

But Havryshko has increasingly run afoul of the Ukrainian authorities due to her continued exposure of fascists within the Armed Forces, academia and the state. Her dismissal from the Krypiakevych Institute marked the culmination of an escalating series of political reprisals originating from the highest levels of the Ukrainian government and academic establishment.

In October 2023, Havryshko spoke out against a photo exhibition titled *Storm of Steel* at the Kiev History Museum, which glorified the Waffen SS Galician Division in the wake of the two standing ovations given by the Canadian Parliament to Waffen SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka. The exhibition linked the Waffen SS division to the Ukrainian Armed Forces’ Third Assault Brigade, which is identical to the fascist Azov paramilitary battalion, integrated into the Ukrainian military. Responding to criticism of the Division, a member of Azov declared on his Telegram channel, “The Galicia Division are heroes... they, like us, were fighting for what is right.”

Havryshko’s criticism—that “the glorification of the Waffen-SS ‘Galicia’ Division leads Ukrainian democracy to a dead end”—was mild compared to what must be said about Ukraine’s so-called “national memory project.” This state-sponsored campaign promotes a falsified history of World War II in which the Nazis and their Ukrainian nationalist collaborators are cast as “heroes,” while the Bolsheviks are depicted as agents of a Jewish conspiracy to destroy Christian civilization. This is not the ideology of democracy, but of fascism.

However limited Havryshko’s criticism, it provoked direct and life-threatening attacks from the Azov-linked media outlet “Political Theology,” run by Yaroslav Kulyk. In a stark example of the intimate ties between Ukrainian academia and fascist forces, Kulyk is the son of Volodymyr Kulyk, one of Ukraine’s most prominent academics. Volodymyr Kulyk holds multiple research

positions at institutions such as the University of Alberta, the London School of Economics, Harvard University, and Stanford. While he serves as “Ukraine’s representative in the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance,” his son Yaroslav is a priest and ideological figurehead for an openly Nazi regiment.

Havryshko responded by exposing Yaroslav Kulyk’s fascist political activity, including photos of him dressed in a Nazi uniform.

Havryshko writes,

As soon as I began writing critically about Ukrainian nationalists, I didn’t just feel pressure—I was bullied by colleagues at conferences. The “political correctness” of my articles was discussed by my boss behind closed doors. My then-director denounced me to the SBU [the Ukrainian Secret Service] as a “Russian agent.” I was subjected to antisemitic attacks.

A year later, claiming that “Azov had lost its ideological orientation,” the academic Volodymyr Kulyk smeared Havryshko publicly as “a person who works against Ukraine.”

“In this way, he designates me as a ‘legitimate target’ for far-right extremists,” Havryshko wrote in response. “He puts the rock in the hands of those ready to use it.”

Havryshko’s prediction proved correct. In January 2025, she was added to the infamous “Myrotvorets” (“Peacemaker”) death list, which publishes the personal contact information and addresses of individuals it declares to be “enemies of Ukraine.” Several prominent political opponents of the Kiev regime have been murdered after being listed on Myrotvorets. The listing brands Havryshko a “criminal” and includes links to her social media accounts.

In the wake of her listing on Myrotvorets, Prof. Kulyk effectively wished her dead, stating that she should “chase Buzyna for all our joy.” Oles Buzyna was a journalist murdered in 2015 shortly after his name and contact information were published on Myrotvorets. Kulyk’s harassment exposes the fact that the entire Ukrainian capitalist ruling class, along with its academic institutions and its European, American, and Canadian sponsors, is in a political and military alliance with fascists and Nazis.

Havryshko’s family in Ukraine is now facing harassment, and her foreign academic colleagues have been subjected to hours-long interrogations upon entering the country about their connections to her. The claims by the SBU, Ukraine’s state intelligence service, that it “lacks the mechanisms” to take down or block the Myrotvorets website are transparent lies. The SBU had no such difficulty blocking the *World Socialist Web Site* in Ukraine in June 2024, after it arrested and imprisoned Bogdan Syrotiuk, the leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, for the political “crime” of being a principled socialist opponent of the war who called for the unification of the Ukrainian and Russian working classes.

Despite these threats, Havryshko continues to denounce the Ukrainian regime on her Twitter/X account, regularly posting

videos recorded by ordinary Ukrainians showing press gangs seizing young men off the streets for forced military service. The widespread hatred of the war among Ukraine’s youth is unmistakable: young men are increasingly resisting being dragged away, and their wives, mothers, and girlfriends can often be seen surrounding the vans and resisting alongside the men.

For her principled opposition to the Nazification of Ukraine, Havryshko’s life has been put in real danger. Announcing the Open Letter on X, she declared:

I don’t let my 13-year-old child go alone on the school bus, to the city library, or even to the nearest supermarket. I’ve changed my daily route to the university. I carefully inspect all package labels and never open anything unless I’m sure where it came from. I’ve changed my entire lifestyle because of the death and rape threats I constantly receive from neo-Nazis fighting in Ukraine. In their closed channels, they openly discuss how to kill me, behead me, pour acid on me, rape me, and burn me alive seasoning it all with antisemitic jokes about Auschwitz, soap and strip pajama. (sic)

In April, Yaroslav Kulyk declared his hope that the fascist Trump regime in the United States would deport Havryshko back to Ukraine, where “a lot of people are waiting for her.” This is a very real threat to her life.

The attacks on Havryshko expose not only the fraud of Ukraine’s claims to “democracy,” but also the nationalist lie that provoking war with Russia would “mechanically weld together all the classes” of Ukraine by redirecting the working class’s anger toward an external enemy. In reality, the seething hostility of the Ukrainian working class toward the puppet regime in Kiev has never been greater. The ruthless repression of Ukrainian workers is the domestic expression of imperialism’s international campaign of war. Havryshko’s “crime,” in the eyes of the Ukrainian ruling class, is that she publicly reveals the real state of class relations in the country.

The WSWS calls for an immediate end on the attacks on Havryshko and the broadest possible support for her by workers, young people and intellectuals. The neo-Nazi forces and state agencies behind the attacks on her must be exposed, as must be their hirelings in academia! The working class must be mobilized in her defense!



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