

# Zelensky government embroiled in massive corruption scandal

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The dictatorial right-wing government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is reeling following the unveiling of a massive \$100 million corruption scandal. So far, two cabinet ministers have been forced to resign and a former business partner of Zelensky was sanctioned.

The scandal was first exposed last Monday when the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAP) announced that a 15-month-long investigation had revealed that several leading members of the Ukrainian government were involved in an embezzlement scheme around Energoatom, the state nuclear company.

Energy Minister Svitlana Hrynychuk and Justice Minister Herman Halushchenko were forced to resign; they had allegedly received kickback payments worth 10 to 15 percent of contract values from contractors building fortifications on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

Other alleged accomplices in the scheme included former Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Chernyshov and Timur Mindich—a close Zelensky associate who is a co-owner of Zelensky's own former TV studio Kvartal 95, who was reportedly tipped off about the raid and had already fled the country to Israel.

Mindich and his other close business associate, Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoysky, were instrumental in bringing the former comedian Zelensky to power in the 2019 presidential elections and Zelensky even traveled in Mindich's personal armored car during the campaign. Zelensky also owned a high-end apartment in the same building as Mindich, where NABU investigators discovered a gold-plated bathroom that Mindich had built for himself. That Zelensky himself was completely unaware of Mindich's massive embezzlement scheme involving ministers in his own government is highly improbable.

In addition to Mindich, former Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Chernyshov is also a well-known Zelensky friend and ally and was accused of receiving over \$1.2 million in cash by NABU.

Following the eruption of public outrage over the sheer

audacity of the embezzlement, Zelensky quickly moved to throw his former associates under the bus, demanding the resignations of both Halushchenko and Hrynychuk last Wednesday and removing them from the security council.

Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko had originally announced Halushchenko's "suspension," which was immediately criticized by Ukraine's so-called "civil society" organizations, which are largely funded by Western backers. Soon after, Zelensky moved to dismiss Halushchenko.

Zelensky also sanctioned Mindich in a desperate attempt to distance himself from his former business partner and personal friend.

There is significant anxiety within the Ukrainian state and ruling class that the scandal-plagued Zelensky government might fall or lose face to such an extent that it would be unable to continue the NATO-backed proxy war against Russia.

Ukrainian investment banker and political commentator Serhiy Fursa was quoted in the Financial Times as saying, "We cannot afford for the Ukrainian president, for the Ukrainian government, to lose its remnants of legitimacy during the war. Otherwise, we risk losing the state in the same way as during the first world war, when desertion at the front came on top of mass despair and political discord."

The current scandal has been exacerbated by the fact that just earlier in July, Zelensky—likely aware of the massive embezzlement and robbery endemic to his government—had moved to limit the power of NABU and SAP, leading to the largest protests across the country since the beginning of the NATO-backed proxy war in February 2022.

According to Zelensky, stripping the agency of its independence was necessary to combat "Russian influence." At the same time, Ukraine's security services (SBU), aligned with Zelensky, had carried out raids of NABU to supposedly arrest Russian spies.

As a result of both domestic outrage and intervention from its Western backers—which strongly backs NABU as a means to control Ukraine's domestic political

apparatus—Zelensky ultimately was forced to backtrack and withdraw his attempt to take over NABU. But the very types of scandals Zelensky was seeking to head off through his control of NABU have now exploded to shake his government just as Russian forces continue to advance and domestic support for the war has eroded.

Former President Petro Poroshenko, Zelensky's main political rival and leader of the opposition European Solidarity party, called for the resignation of Zelensky's government and for opposition leaders to form a coalition government.

"Ukraine has fallen into a dangerous political storm... This growing crisis requires an immediate response and the unification of all healthy forces of society. Throughout our history, in the most difficult times, it was the parliament that took responsibility and stood up for the Constitution and statehood. Today, deputies from different factions have a chance to take a historic step, to stop the chaos that is destroying the country and return a sense of justice to Ukrainians. That is why European Solidarity initiates the resignation of the Cabinet of Ministers. The compromised government must resign, and the parliament must form a new coalition. Which, in turn, will appoint the government—not according to the criteria of personal loyalty or political affiliation, but on the basis of professionalism, patriotism and responsibility. A government capable of confronting the challenges facing the state. The authorities (both the President's Office and the monomajority) must bear political responsibility for their appointments," Poroshenko wrote on the European Solidarity website.

Poroshenko—who continues to visit regularly with Ukraine's imperialist backers in the EU—has himself been accused in countless corruption investigations and was caught in a corruption scandal in 2019 similar to the one currently facing Zelensky.

Zelensky used fighting "corruption" as a major part of his campaign as a political outsider to defeat Poroshenko, who, in addition to being plagued by scandals, was widely despised for his promotion of right-wing nationalism and militarism.

"Modern politicians are tied to old grudges, nepotism, and business projects, and are incapable of changing Ukraine," said Zelensky of Poroshenko in 2019.

Following his election, within just the first two years of his presidency, around 30 people connected either to Zelensky's family or his former comedy group were appointed to high-ranking positions, according to Bihus.Info.

While the corruption scandal is no doubt part of the intense infighting within the Ukrainian state and ruling class, it also has the potential to bring to the fore immense social opposition which has been seething just beneath the surface.

A poll taken over the summer showed that 70 percent of Ukrainians believe that their leaders use the war, which is estimated to have cost hundreds of thousands of lives already, to enrich themselves. The latest revelations starkly confirm what workers have already understood: While the Ukrainian working class continues to die in droves at the front, the highly interconnected Ukrainian ruling class is enriching itself by robbing the state of hundreds of millions in a country where the average monthly salary is just \$660. Meanwhile, since the start of Russia's invasion in February 2022, Ukraine has received about \$152 billion in foreign financial aid from its imperialist backers, according to Reuters. Opponents of the war, such as the Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk, have been imprisoned and silenced.

The fact of the matter is that all factions of the Ukrainian oligarchy, which has historically emerged through the outright theft of state assets during the Stalinist bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism, are steeped in criminality. From their standpoint, the war is above all a means to defend their class interests against the working class and an opportunity for further plunder.

The revelations of unabashed theft and self-enrichment by the Ukrainian ruling class and government, in the midst of a mass slaughter that has been falsely portrayed as a war to defend "democracy" and "freedom," further undermine the legitimacy not only of the war effort but the entire socio-economic system that Zelensky and Poroshenko defend.

From the standpoint of the working class, the revelations heighten the need to intervene independently in the political situation, based on opposition to all factions of the ruling class and the fight to unify workers of the entire former Soviet Union and Europe against war and capitalism.



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