

Fascist Ukrainian court sentences Bogdan Syrotiuk, socialist opponent of war, to 15 years in prison

WSWS Editorial Board
10 August 2026

On August 10, Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist and opponent of the US-NATO war against Russia, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. The verdict, handed down by a district court in the Nikolaev region, also orders the confiscation of his property and electronic devices and the destruction of the socialist books, leaflets and programmatic documents taken from him.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International denounce this verdict and call on workers, young people and all defenders of democratic rights around the world to demand Bogdan's immediate release.

The verdict will be immediately appealed. Under Ukrainian law, the appeal must be filed within 30 days. We call on all supporters of democratic rights to back these legal actions and call for the annulment of the sentence.

Bogdan, a leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), was convicted of "high treason ... under martial law." But the record of the case contains no act of treason—no espionage, no sabotage, no collaboration with any military force. The sole evidence presented against him consisted of his writings, published on the *World Socialist Web Site*, and his communications with the editors who published them.

The state's experts examined 14 of Bogdan's writings and included seven in the indictment. The court was then forced to drop one of the seven—an article on the military commissariats' violent seizure of draft dodgers—after its own forensic commission could find nothing criminal in it. Bogdan has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for six articles.

What was the subversive content? According to the court, the articles contained "non-recognition of Ukraine's legitimately elected political leadership and democratic processes," "comparisons with fascists and Nazis," "negative assessments of Ukraine's Armed Forces" and "reinterpretation of national heroes and historical figures."

In fact, everything written by Bogdan is politically and historically accurate. The "legitimately elected political leadership" is a president whose term of office expired in May

2024. Zelensky remains in power more than two years past his legal mandate, ruling by decree under a state of permanent martial law. Elections have been canceled and basic democratic rights suspended. Bogdan has been convicted of failing to recognize "democratic processes" in a country where no democratic processes exist. His is a verdict handed down by a regime of illegality.

As for the "national heroes" whom Bogdan is accused of "reinterpreting," they are Stepan Bandera and the leaders of the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and the Waffen-SS Galicia Division—Nazi collaborators who supported Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and were implicated in the mass murder of Jews and Poles. The court's complaint about "comparisons with fascists and Nazis" refers to Bogdan's exposure of the official rehabilitation and celebration of these forces.

Among the "proofs" of treason cited by the court are Bogdan's article "The crimes of the Banderovites against the Ukrainian people: Notes by a Ukrainian Trotskyist" and his 2023 May Day speech, "For the Unity of the Working Class of Russia and Ukraine!" In any country where democratic rights retain the slightest meaning, such writings are protected speech. In Ukraine under Zelensky, they carry a 15-year sentence.

When Bogdan was arrested by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) on April 25, 2024, the state claimed he was functioning as an agent of the Russian government. In the more than two years since, nothing was produced to substantiate that libelous allegation. In fact, the articles that are cited in the conviction make explicit Bogdan's opposition to the Russian invasion and the Putin regime.

The verdict refers several times to the "socially dangerous consequences" of Bogdan's positions. This exposes the fact that the prosecution of Bogdan is not about the manufactured pretext of support for Russia. Rather, it is aimed at the growing opposition to war and the Zelensky regime among Ukrainian workers and youth.

The evidence presented in Bogdan's defense was never answered. A 65-page report by Yuri Irkhin, one of Ukraine's leading criminologists, found in Bogdan's writings no

“statements, phrases, sentences, or word combinations that have signs of propaganda aimed at supporting the armed aggression of the Russian Federation.” Rather than respond to it, the court ordered a new examination from a state forensic institute—which, even so, found in the articles no calls for the overthrow of the state, the seizure of power, subversive acts or the alteration of Ukraine’s borders.

The defense established that nothing in the record made out the elements of treason, and that Bogdan’s writings were political speech protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The court swept all of this aside.

The verdict was not the outcome of a legal proceeding but the execution of a political directive from the Zelensky dictatorship. It states that Bogdan acted “on instructions from a representative of the World Socialist Web Site, under the pseudonym ‘David’”—identified in the judgment itself as David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WSWS. The Ukrainian state is asserting the power to declare international socialist and antiwar publications criminal enterprises, and collaboration with them treason.

The decision to destroy the YGBL’s program, its brochures, leaflets and folders of printed articles exposes the real content of the verdict. The methods are those of fascist regimes: imprison the opposition, confiscate its materials, burn its writings. The court even ordered Bogdan to pay more than 178,000 hryvnia to cover the cost of the forensic “examinations” used to convict him.

The sentencing of Bogdan takes place in a country in which left-wing politics has been outlawed. Communist parties and symbols have been banned in Ukraine since the “decommunization” laws of 2015. In 2022, the Zelensky government suspended 11 opposition parties, including the largest opposition party in parliament, which was subsequently banned outright.

Some 20,000 criminal cases have been opened under Ukraine’s treason and collaboration statutes, according to the United Nations Human Rights Office, which reported in September 2025 that it “continues to document cases of torture and ill-treatment” of detainees held by the Ukrainian state. Human Rights Watch describes the collaboration laws as “overly broad and vague”; among those prosecuted are people who carried out “emergency services, construction, humanitarian relief and garbage removal” in occupied territory.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has been banned in Ukraine since June 6, 2024, six weeks after Bogdan’s arrest.

All of this has been buried and concealed from the public by the government and media outlets that claim the war is being waged in defense of Ukrainian democracy.

The frame-up of Bogdan is the act of a desperate regime. Opposition to the war is mounting within Ukraine itself. More than 300,000 criminal cases have been opened against soldiers for desertion or absence without leave since 2022, the majority of them in the past year. In 2025, 69 percent of Ukrainians told

Gallup that the country should seek a negotiated end to the war, a complete reversal of opinion since 2022. Terrified of the growth of antiwar sentiment among workers and soldiers, the Zelensky government is intensifying repression at home while working to create the framework for the direct entry of the NATO powers into the war.

A sentence of 15 years in a Ukrainian prison is the equivalent of a death sentence. The conditions in Ukraine’s penitentiary system are well documented. At the United Nations Committee Against Torture’s review of Ukraine in April 2025, experts cited overcrowding, inadequate access to food and water, the absence of independent medical examinations and a rising toll of deaths in custody. The Council of Europe’s anti-torture committee, reporting on its October 2023 visit to Ukraine, described decaying facilities in which remand prisoners are confined to their cells for up to 23 hours a day and found conditions in one pretrial detention center so degraded that it judged them potentially “inhuman and degrading.”

Bogdan, whose health was already poor at the time of his arrest, has been denied urgently needed medical treatment for over a year, despite repeated promises from the prison administration. Every day behind bars is a threat to his life.

His fate cannot be left to the courts of a state that has just demonstrated its fascist contempt for democratic rights. Bogdan’s freedom will be won by the mobilization of the international working class, youth and all progressive organizations and individuals dedicated to the defense of democratic rights. We appeal to workers, trade unions, student and youth organizations, civil liberties groups, and socialist and antiwar movements in every country: Take up Bogdan’s case. Pass resolutions in your workplaces, unions, schools and universities demanding his release. Issue public statements of protest. Sign and circulate the petition for his freedom.

The fight to free Bogdan Syrotiuk is a fight against imperialist war, dictatorship and fascism. Fill out the form below to get involved.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact