Amid growing support for Ukrainian political prisoner Bogdan Syrotiuk, the *New York Times* maintains its guilty silence

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On Monday, August 10, a court in Pervomaisk, Ukraine convicted the Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk of high treason under martial law and sentenced him to 15 years in prison for having called for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against war.

The response to the verdict has been significant and widespread. Nearly 500 people in more than 40 countries, Ukraine and Russia among them, have signed the petition for Bogdan's release or written letters of protest since the sentencing, and the petition now stands at more than 6,000 names. Historians, doctors, teachers and pensioners have written to the court demanding that the conviction be overturned.

This response stands in sharp contrast to the silence of the major media outlets in the United States and, in particular, the *New York Times*. The *Times* has never reported on Bogdan's case, either his arrest and imprisonment on April 25, 2024, or his sentencing on August 10.

The *Times* cannot plead ignorance. On Tuesday, August 11, David North, the chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) International Editorial Board, wrote to Philip Pan, the international editor of the *Times*, calling on the newspaper to cover the case. North pointed out that on the day of Bogdan's sentencing the *Times* had published a report headlined "Russian Court Bars Country's Only Antiwar Party From Running for Parliament," which noted the seven-year sentence given to the Yabloko party's deputy chairman, Maxim Kruglov, for a 2022 social media post, while the newspaper had printed nothing about a Ukrainian sentenced to more than twice that term.

"If the suppression of antiwar political activity in Russia warrants extensive reporting—and it certainly does—then the sentencing of a Ukrainian socialist to 15 years in prison for activities that include publishing antiwar articles warrants no less serious scrutiny," North wrote.

The *Times* did not reply. One week after Bogdan's sentencing, it published a front-page article titled "Held by Russia, Ukrainian Feels 'Crushing' Fear," with a nine-minute produced audio version. It reports on Artem Murdid, a Ukrainian bank worker arrested in occupied Melitopol in March 2023 and sentenced by a Russian court to life in prison on terrorism charges.

Four journalists worked the story across Kiev, Berlin and Moscow. The *Times* has reporters inside Ukraine, in Kiev, a day's drive from the Nikolaev region where Bogdan was tried and imprisoned.

The *Times* printed Murdid's account of torture while conceding in its own words that it is "impossible to verify," justifying publication because it is "consistent with dozens of accounts." But Bogdan's case requires no such justification: The verdict is a public document, the expert reports exist on paper, the WSWS articles cited as treason are published and readable by anyone. For Bogdan Syrotiuk the *Times* has provided not one line.

The Murdid report presents Russia's imprisonment of Ukrainian civilians—among them, the *Times* writes, people "picked up for singing pro-Ukrainian songs, posting pro-Ukrainian thoughts on social media or transferring money to Ukrainian bank accounts"—as evidence of the character of the Russian state. The same newspaper, however, conceals the character of the Ukrainian state, which imprisons its own citizens for publishing antiwar articles, holds them in prisons the UN Committee Against Torture found in April 2025 to be overcrowded and short of food and water, and governs under martial law without elections.

The *Times* report counts roughly 2,600 Ukrainian civilians verified in Russian custody on war-related

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accusations, of whom, it states, “almost 900” have been charged or convicted, citing the Media Initiative for Human Rights. According to the United Nations Human Rights Office, however, some 20,000 criminal cases have been opened under Ukraine’s treason and collaboration statutes since the war began. The two figures measure what the readers of the “newspaper of record” are permitted to know. One count of wartime prosecution is put on the front page, while the other is passed over in silence.

The *Times’* coverage of political persecution in Russia is voluminous. The paper has published a series of reports on Ukrainians held in Russian prisons—“Ukrainians Tell of Brutal Russian Repression in Occupied Territories” (October 30, 2024), “The Ukrainians Stuck in Russia’s New Gulag” (November 29, 2025) and now on Murdid—and on Russians jailed for criticizing the war. On Monday, it ran its second report in a week on the banned Yabloko party, “Barred From Ballot, a Party Becomes a Vessel for Russians’ Discontent.”

In four and a half years of war the *Times* has not published a report on the conditions in Ukraine’s prisons or on the treason prosecutions of Ukrainian citizens for their political views. Its columnists instead urge Americans to fight for their democracy “as Hard … as Ukrainians Are Fighting to Save Theirs,” as Thomas Friedman’s headline put it on September 23, 2025.

The double standard is a policy of deliberate war propaganda, aimed at demonizing Russia and promoting the dictatorship of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as a bastion of democracy against Russian “authoritarianism.” The *Times* cannot report Bogdan’s case because the case explodes that narrative.

Since 2016, the *Times* has been the principal organ of the faction of the American ruling class, centered in the Democratic Party and the intelligence agencies, that has made confrontation with Russia the central aim of American foreign policy. Its campaign over “Russian interference” in the 2016 election attacked US President Donald Trump from the right, as insufficiently hostile to Moscow, and prepared public opinion for the war in Ukraine. Since February 2022, the *Times* has spearheaded the pro-war campaign.

The *Times* is the journalistic flagship of substantial sections of the intelligence and military establishment that are pressing for deeper US intervention against Russia. Beyond those layers, the *Times* and the Democratic Party speak for sections of the upper-middle class for whom hostility to Russia is an article of faith.

The *Times*’ relationship with the intelligence agencies goes back decades. In October 1977, Carl Bernstein reported in *Rolling Stone* that Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the publisher of the *Times*, had “signed a secrecy agreement with the CIA in the 1950s,” and that, according to a CIA official, the newspaper had provided cover for CIA employees.

The *Times*’ silence on the persecution of Bogdan is entirely in keeping with this role. Its aim is to provide war propaganda aimed at drumming up public support for the escalation of war with Russia.

This escalation is now taking place. Overnight into Sunday, Ukraine launched some 600 drones at Moscow, according to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, and Russian missiles and drones hit Kiev the same night. Bogdan was jailed for opposing the US-NATO war, while rejecting the Russian invasion and calling for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers.

Workers must draw the lessons of the silence of the *New York Times* and of the sections of the Democratic Party for which it speaks. Totally committed to the interests of US imperialism, which is using Ukraine’s youth as cannon fodder in a war with Russia, they have abandoned any defense of even the most basic democratic rights, including freedom of speech.

Workers and young people seeking to defend democratic rights and oppose global war must organize independently of any faction of the political establishment and its corporate media mouthpieces. The defense of Bogdan, and of democratic rights in Ukraine and everywhere else falls to the working class.

Bogdan’s defense has until September 9 to lodge an appeal, and its challenge to his detention, filed with the European Court of Human Rights in the spring of 2025, is still pending.

The *World Socialist Web Site* urges its readers to add their names at wsws.org/freebogdan. Write to the Pervomaisk City District Court at inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua and the Nikolaev Court of Appeal at inbox@mka.court.gov.ua, with a copy to freebogdan@wsws.org, demanding that the sentence be thrown out and Bogdan be freed at once.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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