International support surges for jailed Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

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The international campaign demanding the freedom of Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk continues to expand rapidly following his sentencing to 15 years in prison on August 10.

In little more than a week since the verdict, 672 people from 47 countries have signed the petition demanding Bogdan's immediate release, bringing the total number of signatures to more than 6,050. The campaign is receiving growing support from historians, academics, artists, journalists, political organizations, workers and young people internationally.

Bogdan, a 27-year-old Trotskyist and leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), was convicted of "high treason under martial law." No evidence of espionage, sabotage or collaboration with the Russian military was produced against him. He was sentenced for six political articles published by the *World Socialist Web Site* in which he opposed both the Russian invasion and the US-NATO war against Russia, the rehabilitation of Nazi forces in Ukraine and called for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against war. The court also ordered the confiscation of his property and the destruction of socialist books, leaflets and programmatic documents seized from him.

The wave of opposition to this political frame-up has continued to broaden.

Ukrainian Holocaust historian **Marta Havryshko**, who has extensively documented the role of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and other far-right and pro-Nazi forces in horrific atrocities during WWII and in contemporary Ukrainian politics, signed the petition on Monday.

"Bogdan is a victim of political repression in Ukraine under Zelensky," she wrote. "We must protect him."

Volodymyr Ishchenko, a Ukrainian political sociologist at the Osteuropa-Institut of the Free University of Berlin, commented Tuesday that the prosecution "looks like a typical case of fabricated evidence and framing against Syrotiuk."

Ishchenko noted that one of the sensational claims originally circulated by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU)—concerning a Russian military uniform and epaulettes allegedly found during the search of Bogdan's home—"did not even make it into the main part of the verdict. Even the prosecutor did not use it."

His comments underscore the fraudulent character of the prosecution. When Bogdan was arrested in April 2024, the SBU publicly portrayed him as an agent of Russia. More than two years later, the court convicted him without establishing any act of espionage or concrete collaboration with the Russian state. A 65-page expert report by leading Ukrainian criminologist Yuri Irkhin found no propaganda in Bogdan's writings supporting the Russian invasion. Even a subsequent state-commissioned examination found no calls for overthrowing the government, seizing power, committing subversive acts or altering Ukraine's borders.

Pascal Lottaz, associate professor for Neutrality Studies at Kyoto University's Faculty of Law and Hakubi Center, shared Havryshko's comments on the case. Referring to Bogdan's criticism of "the glorification of the OUN and UPA, the Waffen-SS Galicia Division, and the use of Nazi and far-right imagery in the military, including Azov and other units," Lottaz wrote:

"15 years of prison for criticizing" these forces. "I'm certain this news won't make it to mainstream."

Irish journalist **Chay Bowes**, who has more than 289,000 followers on X, circulated the WSWS petition appeal, writing: "15 years for daring to tell the truth. 15 years for challenging the Dictatorship. Ukraine is a basket case Dictatorship. Zelensky is a criminal."

French investigative journalist and documentary filmmaker **Paul Moreira**, of Premières Lignes, shared the WSWS statement on Bogdan's sentencing, commenting in French: "15 years in prison for this Trotskyist journalist critical of" the Ukrainian government.

French journalist **Alexis Poulin** also took up Bogdan's case on his program *Le revue de presse avec Alexis Poulin*, calling on his audience of more than 320,000 followers to sign the petition demanding Bogdan's freedom.

The Italian international-reportage outlet **InsideOver** published an extensive report on Bogdan's sentencing Tuesday. The article drew attention both to Havryshko's research on the neo-Nazi networks embedded in the Ukrainian military and to the denial of necessary medical care to Bogdan during his more than two years in detention.

Artists and intellectuals demand Bogdan's release

Further statements of protest have also been sent directly to the WSWS.

Italian artist **Costantino Ciervo**, whose exhibition *COMUNE—The Paradox of Similarity in the Middle East Conflict* has itself faced attempted censorship on false allegations of antisemitism, declared his support for Bogdan.

Ciervo stated that if Bogdan was being prosecuted for exposing "Ukraine's historical culpability in abetting the Nazi advance during the Second World War," this was "not a crime, but a plain historical truth."

"To be incarcerated for articulating what every pre-eminent

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historian has repeatedly affirmed in public is nothing short of criminal and scandalous," he wrote.

Berlin author, publicist and songwriter **Wolfgang Herzberg** sent a protest letter to the Pervomaisk City District Court, with a copy to the WSWS. He called on the court to "immediately overturn the harsh sentence against Mr. Bogdan Syrotiuk."

"He merely exercised his right to freedom of expression, which is constitutionally protected in Western democracies, including Germany," Herzberg wrote. "Ukraine wants to become a member of the EU. It therefore cannot issue such a miscarriage of justice when there is apparently no evidence of concrete, conspiratorial—that is, military—collaboration with Russia."

Herzberg wrote that he, too, is a staunch opponent of war and stressed that opposition to the war "against both sides" was entirely legitimate and covered by the democratic right to freedom of expression.

The **Partisan Defence Committee (Britain)**, which had already protested Bogdan's arrest, signed the petition Monday. "The Partisan Defence Committee (Britain) protested Bogdan's arrest and will strongly add our voice to the growing chorus of protest at this outrageous sentence," it stated. The organization subsequently issued an appeal on social media: "Free Bogdan Syrotiuk! … sign and circulate it today."

The **Communist Party of Sweden** has now also covered the case in its newspaper *Riktpunkt*. While explicitly noting its political differences with Trotskyism, the article insists on the fundamental democratic principle involved. "Political texts, criticism of the government or demands for international workers' unity cannot in themselves be equated with high treason," it states.

Petition draws support from across the world

Hundreds of new petition signatories have expressed the same basic conviction: Bogdan has been imprisoned not for a crime but for exercising his fundamental democratic right to oppose war.

Sheldon Richard from Canada wrote: "Bogdan correctly stated that pressure from both sides of the border was the true way to end the war, and for that he was jailed. I assumed that constitutionally protected free speech was a hallmark of the democratic nation of Ukraine."

Loren Parker in the United States commented: "The Ukrainian regime can't pretend to be a besieged citadel of democracy when it persecutes dissidents for speech—especially speech which says nothing untrue."

From New Zealand, **Alexia George** wrote: "He is a young man who does not support war and has chosen to write about peace between Ukrainians and Russians, not from a pro Russian or Ukrainian position but from a position that values life and peace. That is not treason."

Jonathan Hall in Britain pointed directly to the internationalist content of Bogdan's politics: "The spurious charge of 'treason,' for which he is condemned, is an instrument of the nationalism which pits the Ukrainian and Russian working classes against each other."

Brian Dick, from the United States, wrote: "The Zelensky regime has jailed a 27-year-old socialist for 15 years—not for spying, not for sabotage, but for ideas. His books and leaflets were ordered destroyed."

Others signing the petition have drawn the historical implications.

German supporter **Gustav Kemper** noted that August 19 marks the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the First Moscow Trial, in which the Stalinist bureaucracy began the public show trials that provided the judicial framework for the extermination of the leaders of the October Revolution and socialist opposition.

"The verdict against Bogdan," Kemper wrote, "is an attempt by the 'Western democracies' to revive the politics of the Moscow Trials because they fear the growing influence of the Fourth International."

The expanding international response demonstrates that the attempt by the Zelensky regime and its NATO backers to isolate Bogdan and suppress knowledge of his case is breaking down. It stands in ever sharper contrast to the guilty silence of the major Western media, which continue to conceal the imprisonment of a socialist opponent of war while presenting the Ukrainian regime as a defender of "democracy."

Intensify the campaign

The International Committee of the Fourth International and WSWS will intensify the campaign for Bogdan's freedom.

We call on workers and young people, critical intellectuals and academics, artists and journalists, trade unions, civil liberties organizations and anti-war groups throughout the world: **Take up Bogdan's defense. Sign and circulate the petition. Pass resolutions demanding his freedom. Send protest letters to the Ukrainian courts. Break the media silence surrounding his case.**

Write to the Pervomaisk City District Court at **inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua** and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal at **inbox@mka.court.gov.ua**, with a copy to **freebogdan@wsws.org**, demanding that Bogdan's conviction be overturned and that he be released immediately.

The defense of Bogdan is inseparably connected to the fight against war, dictatorship and fascism. His freedom must be won through the mobilization of the international working class and all principled defenders of democratic rights.

Sign the petition at wsws.org/freebogdan and join the fight to free Bogdan Syrotiuk.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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