

Students and workers in Sri Lanka denounce Ukrainian court's imprisonment of socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our correspondents
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Workers and students in Sri Lanka have added their voices to the international campaign for the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk. The 27-year-old Ukrainian Trotskyist and leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists was arrested in April 2024 and sentenced on August 10, 2026, to 15 years in prison for “high treason under martial law.”

No evidence of espionage, sabotage or collaboration with the Russian military was produced against him. He was convicted for writing political articles, published by the *World Socialist Web Site*, which opposed both the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the US-NATO war against Russia, exposed the Zelensky regime's rehabilitation of Nazi collaborators, and called for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against war.

The campaign to free Bogdan is attracting widespread support. The petition for his release now has 6,300 signatures from people in 47 countries. The WSWWS has published statements denouncing the frame-up verdict from historians, academics, artists, journalists, workers and youth internationally.

Meanwhile, pro-imperialist media outlets, such as the *New York Times*, have refused to report this anti-democratic conviction and sentence.

Roshan, a railway worker from the Ratmalana Factory, demanded that the authorities release Bogdan immediately. He stated that the war in Ukraine is being waged for imperialist geopolitical interests and to seize resources, with thousands of people losing their lives and property as a result.

“This destructive war must be opposed. How can opposing war be a crime? The real criminals are the rulers who created and are waging the war. They must be punished,” he said.

Roshan said the lies that were used to justify the war are being exposed and the truth was coming out. “As these issues become more and more obvious and an obstacle to them, the rulers attempt to gag opponents of the war. That is why the Ukrainian government has punished Comrade Bogdan.”

The worker concluded by saying: “There is no democratically elected government in Ukraine. Zelensky is clinging to power by force, using the war as a justification. It is clear that the heroes of the Zelensky regime are collaborators of Hitler. They

are enemies of the working class. I know that Hitler destroyed Marxist literature. Similarly, they are now destroying Bogdan Syrotiuk's Marxist documents. The international working class must rise against this.”

S. Pakalarasi a student from the University of Jaffna said: “The arrest and verdict against Bogdan Syrotiuk are undemocratic acts. As the WSWWS has clarified, the government in Ukraine is undemocratic. There is a fascistic regime there. I oppose this undemocratic verdict. This arrest and verdict show that freedom of expression is being suppressed, not only in Ukraine but also globally. There is no real freedom of expression in Sri Lanka either. I strongly support your campaign for the freedom of a young socialist who bravely exposed the truth.”

Chamika, a second-year student in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Peradeniya made the following statement:

“I only learned about Bogdan from the WSWWS, and I appreciate the fact that he wrote to educate society about the inhuman and brutal war being waged against Russia by the US and NATO. Wars destroy innocent human lives and material resources on an enormous scale. Trump is waging wars like Hitler, and these wars are now directly affecting our lives as well. The war in Iran is also being carried out by the US. As the WSWWS says, a Third World War is unfolding. As a socialist, Bogdan was absolutely right to oppose the war. No one should be allowed to obstruct his freedom to write bitter truth of destructive war.”

Dhanuja, a fourth-year student in the Faculty of Agriculture at the same university, said: “Bogdan has done the right thing by exposing the criminal nature of the war in Ukraine. It is a courageous act and something that must be done.”

Sashik, who is studying for his Ordinary Level examinations at Bharathi Vidyalaya in Panideniya, Kandy, said the WSWWS's explanation of the case “helped me understand many things. In this country too, you cannot speak the truth or do what is right; everyone is expected to approve of the views of those in power. I do not know that much about the war, but war is not a good thing. It causes destruction, particularly to young people like us.

“The Ukrainian government is committing a great crime by imprisoning Bogdan for 15 years because he spoke and wrote against the war. As a school student in Sri Lanka, I express my opposition to this and call for his immediate release.”

Sajith Bandara, a cartoonist, said: “As an artist, I strongly oppose the sentencing of Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk to 15 years in prison.

“Imprisoning a person for 15 years for opposing a war, criticizing a government, or presenting alternative political views about society raises serious questions about democratic rights and freedom of expression.

“War not only destroys human lives; it also leads to severe restrictions on democratic rights in society. In such circumstances, suppressing voices opposing the war only serves to deepen the destruction caused by the war.

“Bogdan is a young man who stood for the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working classes and against the war.

“A society in which an artist, writer, or political activist can be imprisoned for expressing their views raises serious questions about genuine freedom and democracy. Although the voice being silenced today may be that of a single socialist activist, tomorrow it could be an attack on the right of any artist, writer, or ordinary citizen to express their views.

“Art and free thought must not remain silent in the face of war and state repression. Opposing war is not a crime. Holding a political opinion is not a crime. Criticizing a government is not a crime, but silence is.

“Therefore, I call for the immediate annulment of the 15-year prison sentence imposed on Bogdan Syrotiuk and his immediate release.”

Akalanka Seneviratne, a student at Sri Lanka Law College in Colombo, described the sentencing of Bogdan as a “serious attack on freedom of speech and democratic rights.”

He said: “According to the Ukrainian judiciary and the country’s fascistic, war-mongering rulers, Bogdan is a ‘high traitor’ and a supporter of the Russian Putin regime. In reality, he is a socialist who fought for the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working classes against the war. He used his intellectual abilities to help the working class understand the real character of the war being waged by Ukraine against Russia at the behest of the imperialist powers.

“Through his articles, Bogdan Syrotiuk extensively exposed the denial of democratic rights to the Ukrainian people; the dictatorial rule of President Zelensky, whose official term of office ended in May 2024 but who has continued to hold power under martial law; the glorification of Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and the leaders of the OUN; and the use of the Ukrainian people as victims of a war being waged to serve American and NATO interests. These articles clearly demonstrate what Bogdan was actually fighting for. However, denying the Ukrainian people the right to access such information, the Ukrainian fascist state apparatus has banned the WSWs since June 6, 2024.

“The 15-year prison sentence demonstrates that Bogdan Syrotiuk’s powerful written challenge posed a serious threat to Zelensky’s fascistic regime. The growing anti-war sentiment and opposition within the working class in Ukraine has frightened the regime.

“No one can suppress the bitter reality of the war by imprisoning a man who called on workers and the oppressed masses not to become participants in a war waged by the capitalist class, who pointed out that the real problem is the capitalist system, and who argued that a struggle against capitalism is necessary to end the war. In the face of this bitter reality, the capitalist ruling class is desperately attempting to ruthlessly suppress the opposition that is emerging.

“Every day spent in prison is a danger to Bogdan’s life. The struggle to secure his freedom must be taken forward immediately.

“This is part of a broader international struggle, including the defence of freedom of speech. Capitalist governments in other countries are also working together with imperialist regimes to suppress those who criticize the war. After coming to power in November 2024, Sri Lanka’s JVP/NPP government arrested two young people under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act for expressing opposition to the genocide being carried out by Israel in Palestine.

“I firmly demand the immediate withdrawal of the arbitrary prison sentence against Bogdan Syrotiuk and his unconditional release. The ban imposed on the WSWs in Ukraine must also be lifted. I call on workers and youth to support the international campaign being conducted by the WSWs and the International Committee of the Fourth International to secure Syrotiuk’s freedom.”



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