University of São Paulo students speak out in defense of Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
23 August 2026

The Brazilian Socialist Equality Group (GSI) carried out distributions last week at several departments of the University of São Paulo (USP) of a leaflet demanding the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), sentenced in Ukraine to 15 years in prison for his opposition to the war.

The campaign reached USP students weeks after the conclusion of a 54-day strike—one of the largest movements in the history of Brazilian higher education—which was met with brutal police violence ordered by the far-right state government of Tarcísio de Freitas, and with punitive legislation and sordid acts of provocation by fascistic politicians.

The GSI team explained to USP students the facts and political significance of Bogdan's case and campaigned for their support in the international fight for his release. Since his conviction by a Ukrainian court on August 10, more than 1,000 people in 58 countries and territories have signed the petition for Syrotiuk's release, while social media content reporting on and opposing the case has drawn tens of thousands more views, likes and shares. This groundswell of public support stands against the calculated silence of the major press in the United States and Europe, which also prevails in the Brazilian media.

The campaign was met with a warm response from students. GSI members also spoke with representatives of the student unions at the faculties of Architecture, Geography and Social Sciences, who responded positively and said they would bring the case to their leaderships for discussion. At the head of these entities are organizations such as Juntos!—the youth wing of the Morenoite Socialist Left Movement (MES), an internal current of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL)—and the Communist Youth Union (UJC)—the youth wing of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). Neither the PSOL, PCB, nor any other self-declared left-wing organization in Brazil, has reported Bogdan's case or taken a stand in his defense. Their silence contrasts with the agreement and interest expressed by students at the rank-and-file.

USP students denounce Bogdan's persecution and the NATO-backed Zelensky regime

Marco Antônio, a Geography student at USP**,** told the GSI team that he has former colleagues and contacts living in Ukraine who contradict the official narrative about conditions in the country. "The Western media portrays Zelensky as a great leader, a symbol of Ukraine's resistance, but internally that ends up being a great sham," he said. "The population is dissatisfied with Zelensky's decisions... [and with] various social and economic problems that had already been building up even before the war."

On Bogdan's conviction itself, Marco stated: "Zelensky is a former comedian who claims to support freedom of expression, but in fact he is quite selective. The Bogdan case is hypocritical and sad. He had been carrying out a very important historical reexamination within Ukraine, denouncing the Galicia division, which was financed by Nazis and hunted down Jews throughout Ukraine, and which is rarely discussed in the West."

"It's important for people to see the Syrotiuk case because it isn't just an exceptional case," Marco continued. "There are many cases, very little reported, of Ukrainians suffering under repression from their own government. The population is growing more and more exhausted and, as I said, there is significant friction against Zelensky because this was a war that could have been avoided."

Gabriel, also a geography student, went directly to the political content of the charges. "We have to look at what he's saying, because it's just as important as who he is," he said of Syrotiuk.

On the character of the Ukrainian regime headed by Zelensky, Gabriel explained: "He's already declared a state of siege, there are no more elections... Nowadays people get arrested to be sent to the front, to make them disappear, to censor them." He added: "He has been pursuing a policy very similar to what they accuse Putin of doing."

Gabriel located the war in the operations of the imperialist powers standing behind Kiev. "My view is that Ukraine—and I'll say the same about Israel—works for NATO illegally," he said. "So I'm not sure whether Ukraine or Israel is the bigger problem. I believe the real problem is NATO itself. As long as Ukraine remains in their hands, it will act like a fascism."

© World Socialist Web Site

Bogdan's 2023 message to Brazilian workers and youth

The leaflet distributed by the GSI establishes the direct link between the persecution in Ukraine and the political experiences of workers and youth in Brazil—a link that the Ukrainian prosecution's own case indirectly acknowledges.

In March 2023, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) organized, in USP's History and Geography building, the event "The War in Ukraine and How to Stop It." The YGBL sent greetings to that meeting. This statement, seized in Bogdan's prison, is among the documents that constitute the "criminal evidence" assembled against him, and the Ukrainian state has ordered its destruction.

What did this message, written by Bogdan and his comrades and addressed to the students and workers gathered at USP, say?

It declared that neither the government of Vladimir Putin nor that of Volodymyr Zelensky represents Russian or Ukrainian workers—both defend the capitalist system and the interests of their respective oligarchies—and that only the international unity of the working class against war and imperialism can offer a way out. Expanding these conclusions to Brazil, it insisted that "the workers and youth of Brazil must once and for all" break with illusions in the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, which the text warned already in 2023 rested upon the suppression of the class struggle and the pursuit of the interests of the Brazilian capitalist oligarchy, giving cover to the far right rather than confronting the threat of a fascist coup.

The GSI leaflet distributed to the USP students last week concluded:

> It is for writing this—for affirming the brotherhood of Russian, Ukrainian and Brazilian workers against war and dictatorship—that Bogdan Syrotiuk is being convicted.
>
> This makes the Brazilian public and the USP community not distant spectators in this case, but directly affected by it. The criminalization of thought in Ukraine is a dress rehearsal for what the capitalist governments of every country—Brazil included—have in store for anyone who dares to raise their voice against war and fascism and in defense of socialism.

From the war in Ukraine to the militarization of Brazil and Latin America

Under the heading "From the war in Ukraine to the militarization of Brazil and Latin America," the GSI leaflet underscored that recent developments have powerfully vindicated the warning issued by the YGBL in 2023:

> Since then, the war and the dictatorial escalation that document denounced have deepened radically across Latin America. In January 2026, the United States invaded Venezuela and abducted its president; Cuba is today under an unprecedented economic and military siege; and US military operations are multiplying across the continent under the fraudulent pretext of a "war on narco-terrorism." Our region has effectively become a theater of the same world imperialist war in whose name Bogdan Syrotiuk is being persecuted.
>
> In Brazil itself, the Trump administration is openly intervening in the 2026 presidential election—through trade tariffs wielded as a political weapon, through its promotion of Flávio Bolsonaro's candidacy, and through mounting threats. The Lula government, for its part, is responding to this offensive not by turning to the workers of Latin America and the United States itself, who massively reject the war, but with a nationalist and militarist response of its own, promoting rearmament in the name of "national sovereignty."

Bogdan's lawyers have until September 9 to file an appeal. A complaint filed for him in spring of 2025 is still awaiting a ruling at the European Court of Human Rights.

We call on workers and young people, student unions, left-wing and progressive organizations, trade unions, intellectuals, journalists, artists and all defenders of democratic rights in Brazil to take up the demand for Bogdan's unconditional release and the ending of this political frame-up. Add your voice to the campaign!

The petition is at wsws.org/freebogdan. Send letters to the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), copied to freebogdan@wsws.org, calling on them to vacate the 15-year sentence and free Bogdan.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site