

Ukrainian workers destroy army recruitment vehicle in expanding protests against “busification”

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Last Thursday, Ukrainian workers intervened to interrupt a document check being carried out by two service members of the Territorial Recruitment Center (TRC) responsible for the forced mobilization or “busification” of tens of thousands of Ukrainian men off the streets of Ukraine.

According to *Suspilne* news, TRC officers stopped a vehicle at a checkpoint in the western Ukrainian city of Lutsk and demanded to view the male driver’s documents. The man refused to provide any personal information and instead abandoned his vehicle and fled the scene to avoid ending up in the Ukrainian Armed Forces unwillingly.

The TRC officers followed the man towards a residential building in their official vehicle at which point they were confronted by 30 Ukrainian workers opposed to another apparent case of government-sanctioned kidnapping.

Daria Stelmaschuk, spokesperson for the Volyn Regional Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center, stated, “After that, 30 civilians approached the scene and began physically resisting the police officers and service members of the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center, striking them with their hands and unidentified objects.” Both officers were injured in the protest, and their TRC vehicle was essentially destroyed by the crowd. According to the report:

- All the windows and headlights were smashed.
- All the tires were damaged.
- A radio was stolen.
- A body camera was taken.
- The vehicle keys were stolen.

Just a day later, a 25-year-old man stabbed a TRC officer to death after being stopped and refusing to show his military registration documents. Both photos and

summary of the case can be found on the website of Ukraine’s Prosecutor General’s Office and video of TRC officers beating the suspect appeared on social media.

Notably, the incident took place on Stepan Bandera Street in Lviv, named after the infamous leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and war criminal. While the Zelensky regime has expanded its campaign to rehabilitate and honor Nazi collaborators such as Bandera as part of its war efforts, the stabbing of a TRC officer on Bandera Street demonstrates the lengths Ukrainian men will go to avoid fighting in the NATO-backed war against Russia.

On Tuesday, a riot erupted in Ternopil when neighbors came to the rescue of a man who was being abducted inside his own apartment. Special forces and police were deployed to quell the subsequent protest.

The cases in Lviv, Ternopil and Lutsk are just three of many in an expanding phenomenon of spontaneous protests and confrontations—often physical—by Ukrainian workers against the forced mobilization being carried out by the right-wing regime of President Volodymyr Zelensky as it seeks to continue its disastrous NATO-backed proxy war with Russia. They demonstrate the immense social tensions and the despair that has been building up, as workers are seeking to fight against the mobilization while all official trade unions and parties are supporting the war and suppressing strikes.

Such incidents go entirely unreported in the Western media. They are likewise underreported within official Ukrainian media but appear regularly on social media as videos.

Marta Havryshko, Ukrainian historian and professor at Clark University, has shared and popularized many of the most recent incidents on her X account. For her opposition to both the war and Zelensky’s campaign to

honor Nazi collaborators, Havryshko has been relentlessly attacked online and threatened by far-right nationalist thugs who are essential to continuing the disastrous war against Russia and propping up the Zelensky regime.

Earlier this week, Havryshko shared a similar incident to the destruction of a TRC vehicle in Lutsk that occurred in Ternopil when a crowd again intervened against a forced mobilization and smashed the TRC vehicle and assaulted the officers, leaving one hospitalized.

As Havryshko noted, “Similar scenes have recently unfolded in Lviv. What might once have been dismissed as an isolated incident is beginning to look like a pattern—and an increasingly troubling one.”

It bears emphasis that Lviv, Lutsk, and Ternopil are all located in Western Ukraine, predominately Ukrainian-speaking and located in the supposed heartland of Ukrainian nationalism. While still marked by individual acts of despair and spontaneous outbursts of anger, such incidents testify to a growing and significant opposition across the Ukrainian working class to the war despite constant propaganda and the Zelensky police state. A recent Gallup poll found on June 30 that 66 percent of Ukrainians want a negotiated end to the war as soon as possible, against 24 percent who favor fighting on until victory.

For the men involved in these incidents, their escape from TRC thugs may literally mean life or death even if they do not end up fighting at the front.

In May, Oleg Lysenko, a forcibly mobilized resident of Kramatorsk in the Eastern Donetsk region, was found on the side of the highway with his head smashed in after being picked up by TRC officers several days prior. Lysenko later died from his injuries, with the TRC offering no explanation for his death other than Lysenko had escaped from their custody.

In another case, Mykola Mishchenko, 34, died two days after having been forcibly mobilized. His mother said that his body was covered in bruises and one arm had been broken. In this as in many other deaths, the police simply claimed he had fallen from a window at the TRC.

Men who are unlucky enough to fall into the hands of the TRC and live are then forced into the Ukrainian Armed Forces or pay a significant bribe to TRC officers for their freedom.

Since the beginning of the war, the TRC and its officers have been plagued by countless instances of corruption scandals, and many TRC officers have become rich as a result of their scams as the war has impoverished the Ukrainian working class. Reports of standard bribes

reaching \$15,000 effectively eliminates the wealthy and upper classes from serving in the war. In a country where the average monthly salary is just \$700, those who can afford it have already paid off the TRC or fled abroad. According to a recent article in *The Nation* on the Ukrainian conscription crisis, between 2 and 4 million Ukrainian men are hiding from military service.

But even amidst this ever-wider opposition to the further mobilization, the Zelensky government is now discussing its further expansion. In recent weeks, proposals by Ukrainian politicians and NATO military figures to include women who are single and have no children in the draft, have been floated by the media. The secretary of the parliamentary defense committee Roman Kostenko recently stated that “radical changes” to the draft would soon be announced but denied that women would be included in the draft.

With the recent appointment of the former leader of the Ukrainian Secret Service, the SBU, which is overseeing the domestic campaign of terror against opponents of the war, Yevhen Khmara as Defense Minister, it is clear that the Zelensky government is doubling down on its already existing police state. Just prior to his firing, former Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, aware of the immense hatred for the TRC among Ukrainian workers, had announced a “reform” effort that included the banning of TRC officers wearing balaclavas (ski masks) and the introduction of body cameras. While himself a war hawk against Russia, Fedorov has been criticizing Zelensky for the obvious corruption of his government and advocated cosmetic reforms in order to stem the tide of growing working-class opposition to the war.

As important as the growing spontaneous protests against “busification” are, the critical question is to root the struggle to end the war in the working class. The economic and political power of workers in Ukraine, Russia and Europe must be mobilized for a joint struggle against imperialist war and its origins in the capitalist system. This is the stance Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk fought for and for which he now faces 15 years in prison.



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