Socialist Equality Party (UK) calls on 50 British trade unions to defend Bogdan Syrotiuk

Thomas Scripps, Tony Robson
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The Socialist Equality Party has sent a letter to more than 50 trade unions in the UK calling for them to take a stand in defence of Ukrainian anti-war socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by the Zelensky government.

Bogdan fought for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against NATO's war and Russia's reactionary invasion. He was convicted for six articles published on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The letter sent by WSWS UK Editor Robert Stevens notes that Bogdan's imprisonment is in keeping with the far-right, dictatorial regime run by Zelensky. It explains, "The Ukrainian state has outlawed left-wing politics and suppressed all independent political and trade union activity. In March 2022, the Zelensky government… merged the major national television channels' news into a single state-run broadcast."

Stevens adds that "Strikes in Ukraine are prohibited under martial law, and wartime labour legislation has suspended collective agreements and stripped basic protections from the majority of workers."

Despite this, opposition to the devastating human cost of the war is beginning to make itself felt. Workers have forcefully resisted the press-gang "recruitment" of men snatched from the street.

Protests in Ukraine are the sharp end of growing anti-war sentiment across the European working class, which refuses to see its social gains sacrificed for rearmament and its children conscripted into wars for the rich.

Young people have held repeated protests in Germany against conscription. Workers in Italy have held major strike actions against militarism.

Stevens calls attention to the fact that "In recent months, many of Britain's largest trade unions, including the NEU, CWU and Unison, have endorsed the 'Welfare and wages, not weapons and warfare' campaign. This stance reflects growing concern on the part of trade union members over the escalating war drive."

The University and College Union (UCU) is fronting a campaign to pass a related motion at this year's annual conference of the Trades Union Congress.

A petition commits signatories to the petition to "support the UCU's call" for "international solidarity and peace". Its preamble reads, "The working class has nothing to gain and everything to lose by the poor and unemployed of one country killing and maiming the poor and unemployed of another."

Such positions require their authors to speak in defence of Bogdan's democratic rights, whatever their attitude to the war in Ukraine. His case has already been taken up by the Stop the War Coalition, to which many of Britain's trade unions are formally affiliated. At Stop the War's International Conference Against War this June, Bogdan's persecution was raised by Ukrainian speaker Igor Romanchuk.

That conference was endorsed by Unison, the UCU, the Public and Commercial Services Union, the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, the National Education Union, the Fire Brigades Union, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union and others. All of these organisations are bound by this endorsement to support Bogdan's case.

Stevens' letter concludes, "We urge you to take the following action:

? "Write to the court, namely the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) which

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handed down this politically motivated sentence, and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), calling for the sentence to be annulled and the charges dropped. Copies can be sent to: freebogdan@wsws.org

? “Sign and circulate the petition amongst our members: https://www.wsws.org/en/special/pages/freebogdan.html

? “Pass a resolution by your union calling for Bogdan Syrotiuk’s freedom. A model resolution is attached.”

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers to take this campaign into their own hands by popularising Bogdan’s case in their workplaces and passing resolutions in his defence in their branch and regional meetings. Committees should be formed to organise this work.

The text of our model resolution is included below. Write to the *World Socialist Web Site* for assistance, and to let us know of the results as soon as possible.

Motion: Release Bogdan Syrotiuk, defend free speech!

This branch supports the international campaign demanding the immediate release of 27-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk, a socialist and anti-war activist sentenced to 15 years in Ukraine for “high treason.”

We note that the case rests entirely on six articles he wrote for the World Socialist Web Site, calling for working-class unity in Ukraine and Russia to end a conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

We note that the 15-year sentence against Bogdan Syrotiuk is tantamount to a death sentence. His health was poor when he was arrested more than two years ago. He has been denied urgently needed medical treatment while in prison. At the United Nations Committee Against Torture’s review of Ukraine in April 2025, experts cited overcrowding, inadequate access to food and water, the absence of independent medical examinations and a rising toll of deaths in custody.

We note the imprisonment of Bogdan Syrotiuk is part of a wider clampdown to silence anti-war sentiment within Ukraine. More than 300,000 criminal cases have been opened against soldiers for desertion or absence without leave since 2022, with the majority in the past year. In 2025, 69 percent of Ukrainians told Gallup that the country should seek a negotiated end to the war.

The defence of Bogdan is not dependent on agreement with his views, or those of the WSWS on the war. The basic principle is that no government has the right to criminalise freedom of speech, opposition to war or socialist politics. An injury to one is an injury to all.

We therefore resolve to: forward this motion to the court in Pervomaisk which handed down this politically motivated sentence and the court of appeal for it to be annulled via a legal appeal being prepared by September 9; to publicise Bogdan Syrotiuk’s case against the media blackout, circulating the petition among members and in workplaces for Bogdan’s immediate and unconditional release, to donate to and help build the international campaign to mobilise the working class to secure his freedom.

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We urge workers and youth to attend the upcoming online Zoom meeting organised by the Socialist Equality Party on the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk and the socialist fight against the Ukraine war. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 2 at 7p.m. See details below and click here to register.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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