

The Mykolaiv court invokes Ukrainian-only language rule to stop the inflow of letters demanding Bogdan's freedom

David North
3 September 2026

The Mykolaiv Court of Appeal has responded to the worldwide campaign demanding the freedom of Bogdan Syrotiuk with a measure of cynical chauvinism. In reply to scores of letters from historians, artists, legal scholars, workers and students calling for the reversal of his conviction, the court has been sending an emailed statement declaring that “office work in the court is conducted in the state language” and that letters—which it designates “applications”—should be written “in the language provided for by court office work, namely Ukrainian.”

The court's demand is aimed at the international campaign that has erupted since August 10, when the Pervomaisk City District Court, in Ukraine's southern Mykolaiv region sentenced Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old founder and leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, to 15 years in prison for “high treason ... under martial law.” A petition posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* has been signed by thousands. Letters of protest have poured in from more than 30 countries. The inflow has reached a volume sufficient to force a response from the court, after the option of simply ignoring the protests was rejected. The demand that all letters be submitted in Ukrainian is an attempt to discourage and suppress public expressions of support for Bogdan.

The origins of the provision invoked by the court are thoroughly reactionary. The Law on Ensuring the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language, adopted on April 25, 2019, was a blatant act of discrimination against a large portion of Ukraine's population—estimated at between one-third and one-half—whose principal language is Russian.

Pervomaisk, where Bogdan was arrested and tried, and Mykolaiv, where he has been held in prison since April 2024, are Russian-speaking cities of southern Ukraine. The court that is demanding the world write to it in Ukrainian operates in a region where a large part of the population has had its own language stripped of official standing. The same national chauvinism that deprives Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine of their democratic rights is now being directed against the international campaign for Bogdan's freedom.

The legal pretext is fraudulent. The language restriction

invoked by the court pertains to procedural documents filed by participants in proceedings, including pleadings, motions and evidence. Letters protesting a verdict, sent from abroad, are not procedural filings. There is no law that requires them to be written in any particular national language. The court has chosen to classify the letters as “applications” and thereby subject them to the administrative language restriction, purely as a deflection tactic.

The cynicism is transparent. The court is entirely capable of understanding the import of any letter, in whatever language it is written, that contains the name “Bogdan Syrotiuk.” When dealing with its NATO masters, Zelensky and his henchmen prove remarkably fluent in whatever language is required to solicit money and weapons. The same state whose president pleads before foreign parliaments in their own languages instructs foreign workers and academics that their protest over a political prisoner must be submitted in Ukrainian.

The attempt to suppress the campaign will fail. Workers, youth, principled scholars and all those committed to the defense of democratic rights will take little note of the court's fiat. As the facts of the case become more widely known, outrage against the verdict will grow. The number of signatures will grow. More individuals and organizations will speak out in defense of Bogdan, and the letters will continue to pour in.

Outrage against the verdict rests on irrefutable facts, outlined in the petition demanding Bogdan's freedom:

The conviction rests entirely on protected political expression. The sole evidence presented against Syrotiuk consisted of six articles published on the *World Socialist Web Site* and his communications with the editors, who published them. No act other than writing and publishing was alleged or proven. To convict a citizen of treason for writing for a socialist publication is to criminalize political speech itself, in violation of Article 34 of the Constitution of Ukraine and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Ukraine is a signatory.

The central allegation of the prosecution was never substantiated. When Syrotiuk was arrested by the SBU on April 25, 2024, the state claimed he was an agent of the Russian

