

Australian educators rank-and-file committees demand freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
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The Committee for Public Education (CFPE) recently convened two emergency meetings of rank-and-file committees (RFCs), the Victorian Educators RFC and a combined meeting of the Western Sydney University and Macquarie University RFCs.

Both meetings passed a resolution unanimously condemning the conviction and sentencing of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist, to 15 years' imprisonment. The RFCs include academics, teachers, and other university and education workers as well as students from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

The committees bring educators and education workers together from all sectors of education on the basis of a common class interest and independent of, and in opposition to, the trade-union bureaucracies and the governments they serve.

The resolution stated:

The Committee for Public Education condemns the conviction and sentence imposed on Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 27-year-old socialist opponent of the Zelensky government and the NATO-backed Ukraine-Russia war and demands his immediate and unconditional release. Bogdan founded the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, a Trotskyist youth organisation. He now faces a sentence of 15 years in prison for 'high treason under martial law.'

According to the court, the articles for which Bogdan was charged contained "non-recognition of Ukraine's legitimately elected political leadership and democratic processes," "comparisons with fascists and Nazis," "negative assessments of Ukraine's Armed Forces," and "reinterpretation of national heroes and historical figures."

These formulations make clear that Bogdan is not being targeted for any genuine criminal act, but for

expressing oppositional political views that the state has chosen to criminalise. His persecution is a violation of basic democratic rights. Under martial law, the Zelensky government has banned opposition parties, shut down independent media, and deployed the SBU security service to arrest, torture, and imprison anti-war dissidents—conditions the US State Department itself has documented as involving "harsh and life-threatening prison conditions." The Zelensky government glorifies Stepan Bandera a former leading Nazi collaborator whose OUN faction participated in the mass murder of Jews and Poles as a "national hero," with both the Ukrainian parliament and senior military officials publicly marking his birthday.

This suppression of anti-war dissent is not unique to Ukraine; it reflects a pattern common to governments worldwide. Defending free speech and political opposition cannot be separated from organising the working class against imperialist war and capitalism.

The resolution ended with those present committing to advance the campaign by raising Bogdan's plight in their workplaces, circulating statements of support, and encouraging other educators and workers to adopt similar resolutions.

Following the meetings several participants wrote letters of support for Bogdan.

Yasemin, a public servant from Victoria, wrote:

The peaceful expression of political beliefs and criticism of governments are fundamental elements of a free and democratic society. Writing critical articles is not a crime.

I am particularly concerned that the prosecution of an individual for expressing anti-war views has a chilling effect on others who speak openly about the conflict and its

consequences. People should not be forced into silence because their political opinions are unpopular, controversial, or contrary to the government's views.

Freedom of expression, freedom of conscience and the right to participate in public debate are fundamental human rights recognised internationally.

I therefore respectfully call upon the Ukrainian courts to uphold the rule of law, ensure that Mr Syrotiuk receives a fair, transparent, and impartial judicial process, and fully respect his fundamental rights.

The charges against him are based solely on the peaceful expression of his political and anti-war views. I respectfully urge the Ukrainian authorities to dismiss those charges and release him immediately.

The Ukrainian judiciary must approach Mr Syrotiuk's case with independence, fairness and respect for fundamental human rights. His case is not only about one individual; it also raises important questions about the protection of freedom of expression and political dissent during wartime.

I respectfully urge the Court and the relevant Ukrainian authorities to release Bogdan Syrotiuk, dismiss the charges that lack credible evidence of a genuine criminal offence and ensure that his fundamental human rights, including his right to freedom of expression, are fully protected.

Kyra, an educator from Sydney, said:

The jailing of Bogdan Syrotiuk is a heinous injustice that is easily seen by the majority of people. The corruption and contortion of justice to hide their criminal activities speaks loudly to their incorrect statements and actions. Perpetuating this unethical situation is enabling changes to the fabric of society and the rights of all to exist peacefully. Release this man.

Barry, a retired university educator from Brisbane, wrote:

Syrotiuk's conviction for high treason has no foundation in evidence of such a relationship with Russia, indeed of any relationship at all. The Court should review this case to ensure justice is done. The Court would then find the verdict unsubstantiated, and overrule it, releasing the defendant. It is a miscarriage of justice. He should be released immediately.

Will, a secondary school teacher from Melbourne, wrote:

Your verdict against Bogdan Syrotiuk is a crime against the truth. The "treason" for which you have condemned him to 15 years is nothing more than his principled insistence that Ukrainian and Russian workers share common interests and must unite against their exploiters rather than kill one another in a war that serves the European and US ruling elites. Bogdan has never acted for any state. He has acted for the truth: that NATO wages this war for domination of

Eastern Europe, and that the Zelensky and Putin regimes sacrifice hundreds of thousands of people to enrich corrupt oligarchies.

Your ruling is the admission of a government that fears the truth because its survival depends on suppressing all opposition. You have imprisoned a young man for expressing political views that threaten no one except those who profit from war. History will record this judgment for what it is: a fascistic assault on democratic rights in service of a criminal war.

This injustice must be overturned. Free Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Sue, a teacher in Melbourne, wrote:

I condemn in the strongest terms the 15-year sentence imposed on Bogdan Syrotiuk and demand its immediate annulment and his unconditional release.

Bogdan Syrotiuk has been imprisoned not for any act of treason—not espionage, not sabotage, not collaboration with any military force—but for his political ideas. The sole "evidence" against him are his writings that call for the international unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against a war that has already consumed hundreds of thousands of lives. The verdict against him is an act of political repression that belongs to the darkest traditions of fascism.

This sentencing is a direct attack on the younger generation. Bogdan's real offence—the reason the Zelensky regime has singled him out—is that he gave political voice to this accelerating international opposition. He argued that the working class of Ukraine and Russia have no interest in slaughtering one another for the benefit of their ruling classes.

The sentencing of Bogdan Syrotiuk exposes the fraud of the claim that this war is being waged in defense of democracy. It is being waged to suppress the democratic rights of the working class, in Ukraine and internationally.

Since the beginning of the war the Albanese Labor government has poured \$1.5 billion in military aid into the Zelensky regime—making Australia the largest non-NATO contributor to this war—while remaining silent as that same regime burns socialist books and sentences a 27-year-old to 15 years for his political writings. They fund the regime and look away from its crimes. That is not a defence of democracy—it is complicity in dictatorship.



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