

“15 years in prison – just because he opposes the war”: voices from Germany call for the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
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On Sunday, 6 September, at 3 p.m., the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) will hold a rally at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin demanding the immediate release of 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist and antiwar campaigner Bogdan Syrotiuk.

On 10 August 2026, he was convicted for “high treason.” The sole “evidence” presented against him consisted of articles he wrote for the *World Socialist Web Site* opposing war and nationalism and exposing the crimes of Nazi collaborators in Ukraine.

A wave of protest against the verdict is building around the world. In recent weeks, members and supporters of the SGP have distributed leaflets, put up posters and held discussions across Germany to publicise the campaign for Bogdan’s release.

In Berlin, the case is a central issue in the SGP’s campaign for the Berlin state elections. The party links the fight for Bogdan’s release to building a socialist movement against the German government’s war policy.

We publish below statements from workers and students expressing solidarity with Bogdan.

Gabriel, a young nurse from Bielefeld, explained: “Bogdan Syrotiuk called fascists and Nazis by their true names. Every article he wrote was politically and historically accurate. Bogdan’s conviction shows that there are no democratic processes in Ukraine.”

Gabriel said Syrotiuk was sentenced to 15 years in prison “just because he is against the war and a socialist.”

Syrotiuk was arrested more than two years ago, on 25 April 2024. A few weeks later, the WSWs was banned in Ukraine. “That’s terrifying. Everyone should have access to this website,” Gabriel said.

Aaron, a student at the Free University of Berlin and a member of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), is supporting the campaign in Berlin. In his view, the verdict exposes the true nature of the Zelensky regime: “When martial law was imposed in Ukraine, opposition parties and media were banned, all criticism of the war was criminalised and critics like Bogdan were jailed as ‘national

traitors.’”

First campaign ad of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) for the 2026 Berlin elections

Aaron sees the case as an expression of a broader development: “This war strips away the mask of the nation-states of capitalism. Phrases about democracy or humanism become ever more self-contradictory the more that upholding them stands in the way of capital’s profit interests.”

NATO’s eastward expansion, he said, was not a “democratisation of former Soviet states” but an extension of America’s sphere of influence. Germany was also using the war “to rise to become Europe’s leading military power.” To this end, the population was being attacked on every front through sanctions against critical journalists, cuts to social benefits and Bundeswehr (German armed forces) propaganda in schools.

“Bogdan’s imprisonment and conviction remind me of the legal cases against Julian Assange or Carl von Ossietzky,” said **Michael**, a 65-year-old environmental engineer from Berlin. They too, he said, exposed the crimes and intrigues of the ruling system to the public. “In Bogdan’s case, there is the additional factor that he exposed the fascist character of the Ukrainian government and recalled the historical ties between the Ukrainian and Russian populations in the Soviet era.”

Michael continued: “The supposed defence of ‘Ukrainian democracy’ is nothing more than cheap demagoguery that no longer works on large parts of the population. That’s why the recent incidents at Leipzig airport serve to manufacture a pro-war mood.” The so-called hybrid war, he said, represented a further escalation of the war.

Klaus, a retired lecturer at a Berlin adult education centre (Volkshochschule), called the verdict “an act of state terror.” Germany and NATO were using Ukraine as a “battering ram against Russia,” he said. “German business wants to exploit Russian raw materials and workers without the interference of a relatively strong state.”

He added: “Bogdan’s achievement is to point out that Ukrainian and Russian workers are being made to give their lives for their oligarchs. But they can end the war if they send

the billionaires packing. That's why, for me, signing the petition for Bogdan is only the beginning. We too have to convince working people that they can tie the hands of Germany's warmongers by using their own power against them."

Michael, a Slavic studies student at Humboldt University in Berlin, supports Bogdan's release because he "speaks out for peace and for uniting the working class in both Russia and Ukraine against the regimes of Zelensky and Putin." The Ukrainian regime, Michael said, "obscures the truth about the crimes of the fascists, the followers of Bandera and the OUN/UPA (the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). Bogdan fights hard against this falsification of history, which is why the Ukrainian regime is persecuting him too."

Kim, a metalworker living in Norway, emphasised the international dimension: "No government has the right to censor and persecute; no court has the right to punish Bogdan or anyone else for their political convictions and for voicing opposition. These are inalienable democratic and human rights."

Andreas, a works council member at the auto parts supplier ZF, pointed out that Bogdan Syrotiuk is not an isolated case: "The state's actions against him are typical of what happens when people get 'too active' against the wars and interests that the population is being used for. Examples can be found all over the world, in practically every country, including Germany."

"We will become cannon fodder"

The most vivid account of the situation in his home country comes from **Ilja**, a 22-year-old Ukrainian who fled to Berlin only a few days ago. Kiev, he said, is currently being "very heavily bombed," with "shopping areas, ordinary markets, residential districts and civilian infrastructure" being destroyed. "It's not true that only military facilities are being hit."

Ilja described what mobilisation means for young men in Ukraine: "People are simply abducted off the streets. They stop them, beat them and force them into vans for no reason at all." Not even a disability protects them, he said.

"We are forced to flee our own country, the country where we grew up, where we lived and developed and where we wanted to build our future. We are simply forced to flee because we understand that in two years, we will be nothing but cannon fodder on the battlefield. Everyone gets sent to the front. If you don't have connections or know anyone in the military apparatus, they can send you anywhere."

The true numbers of dead and wounded were being concealed, he said: "Every second person is walking around

with prosthetics by now. Some have lost their arms, some their legs. They tell at most 20 percent of the truth. So when they report, for example, that 15 or 20 people were killed overnight, that information is false."

Ilja buried a classmate who had volunteered. His classmate was 19 years old. "Now all our friends are lying in the cemetery." Of those his age who volunteered, he said, "almost all of them have died. Really, only a few people are left, and even they were very badly wounded." Anyone who recovers even somewhat is conscripted again and sent back to the front.

At the aluminum plant where Ilja worked until his departure, half the workforce quit within three months because workers were receiving "very little money" and their wages were constantly paid late. Ukraine's average monthly wage of around €500 is not enough to live on.

Ilja rejected the entire war on principle: "I believe this war should never have happened. It feels as if everything was deliberately staged to, so to speak, tear the Slavic peoples apart."

He concluded: "We are completely against the Zelensky regime and against the Putin regime. We are for peace. We are for peace across the whole world. We are young people. We want to develop, learn the language and work. War is not our profession."

More and more young people in Ukraine think as Ilja does. Bogdan has given this resistance a conscious political orientation and a socialist programme, which is why he has become a target of the Ukrainian government.

In his statement, Gabriel therefore appealed: "As the working class, we have to stand together and fight for Bogdan's release. We cannot stand by and watch a man who opposes war and has fought for so much be tortured and, in the worst case, die. We have to fight against this, and every voice counts."

Join us on Sunday, 6 September, at 3pm at the Brandenburg Gate: "Stop the Ukraine war! Freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk!" Sign the petition for his release. Support the campaign and the trial costs with a generous donation.



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