

Prominent Tamil newspaper in Sri Lanka publishes article demanding freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
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On September 6, *Uthayan*, a major Tamil-language newspaper based in Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka, published a two-page feature article supporting the international campaign to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

On August 10, a court in Pervomaisk sentenced Bogdan, a 27-year-old socialist and leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), to 15 years in prison on charges of “high treason” under martial law. His “crime” was writing articles for the *World Socialist Web Site* calling for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers to end the US-NATO proxy war with Russia.

The campaign for Bogdan’s immediate release, including an online petition, has gained widespread support from workers, intellectuals, academics, young people and others across the world. In Sri Lanka, hundreds of people, including workers, intellectuals and young people, have expressed their support and anger toward the fascistic Zelensky regime in Ukraine.

Most of the Colombo-based capitalist media have remained totally silent and ignored the calls from the WSWs to report on the persecution of Bogdan. Police have harassed supporters of the Socialist Equality Party at the University of Jaffna during a campaign for Bogdan’s freedom—an indication of the ruling elite’s nervousness about support among students for the imprisoned socialist.

Sunday’s article in *Uthayan* was headlined “Court buries a voice against war.” Based on WSWs coverage of Bogdan’s conviction and sentencing, the article presented the fundamental issues at stake in the campaign for his immediate release and included color photos of Bogdan.

Founded in the mid-1980s in war-ravaged Jaffna, *Uthayan* operated under extremely difficult conditions during the decades-long communal war waged by Colombo against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite other Jaffna newspapers being forced to stop publishing or coming under the control of armed groups, it continued to publish.

Uthayan’s office was shelled in 1987 and hit by an aerial attack in 1990. It continued publishing during the 1995–96 military operations. In 1999, it came under a grenade attack, and in 2000, the government temporarily closed the newspaper under emergency regulations. In 2006, armed attackers killed two employees; in 2009, distributors were attacked and newspapers burned. In the same year, the newspaper received the Sepala Gunasekara Award for defending press freedom.

Below is the full text of the article, which has been translated into English and lightly edited by the WSWs.

Court buries a voice against war

On April 25, 2024... the morning dawned in an uneasy calm in the southern part of Ukraine. Bogdan Syrotiuk, a member of “the Young Guard of the Bolshevik-Leninists” and a 25-year-old socialist fighter, was going about his daily political and writing work as usual. But he did not expect that day to turn his life upside down.

A unit of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) surrounded Bogdan’s residence. Without any warning or proper evidence, Bogdan was arrested. The government prosecutors brought the most outrageous charges against him, saying that he had committed high treason under martial law... and had acted as an agent of the Russian government and had plotted against the country’s sovereignty. But the sad truth is that even two years after his arrest, the government has not been able to present any evidence in court for that outrageous charge!

August 10 verdict: A brutal attack on freedom of expression

After a long legal drama, on August 10, 2026, the district court in the Nikolaev region handed down its shocking verdict. The court sentenced 27-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk to 15 years in prison. The verdict did not stop there: the court ordered the confiscation of Bogdan’s assets and electronic devices and the destruction of socialist literature, pamphlets, Marxist brochures and programs seized from him.

Imprisoning opponents, confiscating their property, and burning and destroying their thoughts and writings are all dirty methods that have only been used by fascist regimes in history. This ruling has exposed how the Ukrainian government, which claims to be defending democracy today, has resorted to the same fascist methods. Not only that, but the court has also ordered Bogdan to pay more than 178,000 hryvnia [\$US4,000] to cover the cost of forensic examinations by the Ukrainian state.

Writings labelled as treasonous

In the case against Bogdan Syrotiuk there was no evidence of military conspiracy, espionage, sabotage, or conspiracy with the military forces of an enemy country. The only evidence presented against him was his articles published on the *World Socialist Web Site* and his email

correspondence with the international editors who published them.

The state's forensic experts examined 14 articles written by Bogdan. They included 7 of them in the criminal indictment. The funny thing is that one of those 7 articles was deemed inadmissible in court. The government's own forensic commission admitted that there was nothing criminal in that one article Bogdan had written about military recruiters and the violent arrest of deserters!

Ultimately, Bogdan was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the remaining 6 articles. According to the court's verdict, the major crimes contained in Bogdan's articles were:

- Failure to recognize Ukraine's legally elected political leadership and democratic procedures
- Comparisons of the government's policies with those of fascists and Nazis
- Negative assessments about the Armed Forces of Ukraine
- Misrepresentation of national heroes and historical figures

Zelensky's illegitimacy and pseudo-democracy

Who is the "legally elected political leader" that the court refers to in its ruling? President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose term ended in May 2024.

Zelensky is ruling despite his tenure having expired. All elections in the country have been canceled: opposition parties have been banned. All democratic rights, including freedom of expression and assembly, have been suspended.

In a country without any democratic practices, the fact that Bogdan was sentenced for failing to recognize democratic practices is the greatest irony in the history of international law. In fact, this is the verdict of a totalitarian regime, which has lost its legitimacy to sustain its existence.

The truth exposed by Bogdan

Who are the "national heroes" that the Ukrainian court says Bogdan "misrepresented"? The national heroes are the Ukrainian nationalists of OUN [Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists] led by Stepan Bandera during World War II and the leaders of the Nazi Waffen-SS Galician division. These Nazi collaborators, who enthusiastically supported Adolf Hitler's brutal invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, were the perpetrators of genocide who murdered tens of thousands of Jews, Poles, and Soviet civilians.

Today, the Ukrainian government officially celebrates these Nazi forces and their leaders by erecting statues of them as "national heroes." Bogdan's article "The crimes of the Banderovites against the Ukrainian people: Notes by a Ukrainian Trotskyist" and his May Day speech "For the unity of the Russian and Ukrainian working class!" exposed the rehabilitation of Nazis by the government. In any civilized country with even a modicum of respect for democratic rights, such historical writings would fall under the protected right to freedom of expression. But under Zelensky's rule, this was rewarded with a 15-year prison sentence.

Growing opposition to war

The verdict repeatedly points out that Bogdan's articles will have

"socially dangerous consequences." One fact is clear from this: this case is not about any support for Russia by Bogdan, but rather about suppressing the growing popular opposition to the war among workers and youth. Opposition to the NATO-backed war within Ukraine is growing stronger by the day.

More than 300,000 criminal cases have been filed in Ukraine against servicemen for deserting the army, or being absent without leave, since 2022.

In a 2025 Gallup poll, 69 percent of the population said they wanted an immediate end to the war through negotiations. The government of Zelensky, which has lost support from its own people, is terrified of this public backlash. That is why he is scapegoating people like Bogdan: to spread fear among the public.

Prison is a cage of death: Bogdan's life is in danger!

A 15-year sentence in a Ukrainian prison is not just a prison sentence; it is the equivalent of a death sentence in disguise. The horrific conditions in Ukraine's prisons have been documented worldwide.

In April 2025, the United Nations Committee Against Torture issued a report condemning the dire conditions in Ukrainian prisons, including inadequate food and water, denial of basic medical examinations, and an increase in the number of deaths in custody. Similarly, the Council of Europe's Committee against Torture assessed the conditions in Ukrainian detention facilities as inhuman and degrading. Urgent medical treatment for Bogdan, who has had serious health problems since his arrest, has been denied for the past two years.

Every moment spent behind bars is putting his life at risk.

Court ignores expert report

The court completely rejected the strong evidence presented in Bogdan's defence. A 65-page report prepared by a leading criminologist and linguistic expert in Ukraine, Yuri Irkin, found that "there are no elements, phrases, sentences or word combinations in Bogdan's writings aimed at supporting the armed aggression of the Russian Federation."

Unable to respond to this objective report, the court requested another examination of his writings by a government-appointed organisation. However, the government's appointees also admitted that Bogdan's articles contained no call for overthrowing the government, seizing power, or civil unrest. Nevertheless, the court declared Bogdan's political speech, which is protected under Article 10 of the International Covenant on Human Rights, to be "unlawful and reprehensible."

A call for global protest!

An appeal against this unjust verdict against Bogdan Sirotiuk will be filed. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International are providing their full support for this legal struggle.

Bogdan's fate cannot be left to the courts of a totalitarian state that suppresses political opponents. Only the united struggle of the international working class, youth, and organizations dedicated to defending democratic rights can make Bogdan's release possible!

Workers, unions, students, civil rights groups and anti-war organisations in every country must immediately take up Bogdan's case and pass resolutions in schools, universities and workplaces demanding his immediate and unconditional release. It is time for global support to reach out to make possible the release of Bogdan Sirotiuk, a young activist imprisoned for the sole reason of speaking out against the war!

Visit the new campaign website and join the fight to free Bogdan Syrotiuk: FreeBogdan.org



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact