

Support in Australia and NZ for the freedom of jailed Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
9 September 2026

The international campaign for the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist sentenced to 15 years in prison for his political opposition to the NATO-Russia war, continues to win support across Australia, New Zealand and in South Korea. The following statements are from students, young people, prominent lawyers and left-wing organisations.

Calvin, who works in the construction industry in New Zealand, said the Ukrainian state was “suppressing and silencing voices calling the government out for aligning with Nazi sympathizers and fascistic ideals.” He pointed to the Azov Battalion, which began as a neo-Nazi group in 2014 and is now part of the military.

“Bogdan Syrotiuk has been sentenced to 15 years [in prison] for calling out the administration for allowing these extremist groups to integrate into the war, and calling for workers’ unity against the capitalist classes in both Ukraine and Russia to bring the war to a halt. Bogdan needs to be released, as journalism and workers’ advocacy are crucial in a democracy. Calling out governmental issues, extremist groups, and calling for unity are not acts of treason.”

Daniel, a history student at Western Sydney University, said he finds it “hypocritical that Ukraine and the Western media claim to value and defend free speech and political freedom, yet they are completely silent on Ukraine locking Bogdan up for simply criticising the government and war.

“It is clear that Ukraine’s government is trying to make an example out of Bogdan through his excessive punishments as a means of silencing opposition against the government and war.”

Shradha, a Year 11 student from Sydney, sent a letter of support for Bogdan addressed to the Ukrainian courts responsible for his sentencing.

“Government is introduced to the world’s little children

as ‘for the people, by the people.’ Yet here we are, ignoring the people and silencing them just because they brought up the cold, hard truth.”

She continued: “For how long are we going to punish someone for calling out the truth some are scared to confess? He is an innocent and strong individual who should be released and not wrongfully accused of something he never did. Since when is being honest a crime? Since when is empathy a crime and since when is humanity decreased to its end?”

Shradha concluded her letter: “Please grant him freedom!”

Raine, who is currently unemployed, said: “Bogdan Syrotiuk called on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite and spoke out against war.”

He described the prosecution and imprisonment of Bogdan as “fraudulent and undemocratic.”

“Bogdan has been charged with high treason; no evidence of sabotage or direct military collaboration. We need international unity of workers who are against war to call for the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk. War offers nothing for the working class.”

Lawyer and former journalist Mark Davis and civil rights barrister Stephen Kenny have submitted statements to the Pervomaisk City District Court and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal. In their letters, both expressed support for the Ukrainian war effort, a position at odds with that of Bogdan and the *World Socialist Web Site*. Nevertheless, they stated their principled opposition to Bogdan’s sentencing as a violation of civil liberties and the rule of law.

Davis was an Australian investigative journalist, best known for his work with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s *Four Corners* and *Foreign Correspondent* programs and SBS television’s *Dateline*. Davis interviewed Julian Assange in 2010 and 2011 and played

an important role in the campaign to secure his release. He was also a lawyer for David McBride, an army lawyer who was prosecuted and jailed for 27 months for exposing Australian military war crimes in Afghanistan.

Davis states, “The reputation of nations can fall on a handful of legal prosecutions based on little more than some hasty piece of legislation that dreams up a new category of crime that from the outside doesn’t feel like a crime at all. That is what the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk presents to the world. Not an image of a new nation with a vibrant culture, broad shoulders and the welcoming air of a liberal democracy.

“This conviction speaks to dictatorial, selective, politicised prosecutions and a grey repressive, unwelcoming state. And it is doing it at the very time that the Ukraine needs friends and thoughts towards a future.”

Kenny is a former chairperson of the South Australian Council for Civil Liberties and represented David Hicks in the protracted campaign to secure the release of the young Australian from Guantanamo Bay. In 2022, he was appointed as the Australian solicitor for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange then incarcerated in Britain’s Belmarsh Prison.

In his statement, Kenny wrote, “As a lawyer, the evidence does not appear, in my opinion, to in any way support such charges and in particular, nor do they support such an unreasonable sentence... The imprisonment of Mr Bogdan Syrotiuk is not consistent with any press freedom, or with any support for civil liberties and the rule of law.’

He concluded, “Mr Bogdan Syrotiuk’s efforts in writing for the *World Socialist Web Site* were none other than to honestly publicise the facts and his opinion as he sees them and in a manner which we would expect a democratic country to support.”

Two left-wing organisations, Communist Unity in Australia and the Bolshevik Group in South Korea, have issued statements in support of the campaign. These organisations have substantial political differences with the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International. Nevertheless, their support for Bogdan’s defence reflects the basic class principle that no socialist should be imprisoned for opposing imperialist war and advocating the international unity of the working class.

Communist Unity declared that Bogdan “called for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against a war in which both sides have murderously pursued reactionary

objectives.” The group wrote that Bogdan, “convicted of ‘high treason’, committed no crime,” and that his “blatantly fraudulent political prosecution,” during which he has been “denied treatment for a serious medical condition, ... constitutes torture by the Ukrainian state.” They conclude that “the persecution of Bogdan and countless others by the US-backed Kiev regime gives the lie to the imperialist narrative that this is a war between ‘democracy and authoritarianism’.”

The Bolshevik Group noted that the court ordered not only Bogdan’s imprisonment but “the destruction of the program, brochures and leaflets” of his organization, the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, declaring that “writing for a socialist publication has been declared treason.”

The group pointed to the 65-page report by criminologist Yuri Irkhin, which found in Bogdan’s writings no “statements, phrases, sentences, or word combinations that have signs of propaganda” supporting Russia’s war—a report “the court never answered.” It warned that, given Bogdan’s health and a prison system whose “denial of medical care and rising deaths in custody” have been documented by the UN and the Council of Europe, “a 15-year sentence is the equivalent of a death sentence.”

We urge all readers to sign the petition at freebogdan.org, and to use the site’s letter-writing tool to send a letter in Ukrainian and their own language to the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), copying freebogdan@wsws.org, and to make as substantial a donation as possible to the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact