

Support in Manchester, England for freedom of Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters

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The international campaign for the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk continues to win support, including in Manchester, north-west England. The 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist was sentenced to 15 years in prison by the Zelensky regime on August 10, charged with “high treason... under martial law” for articles he wrote for the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) calling for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against the NATO-backed war and against the capitalist regimes in both countries.

At the Royal Mail depot in central Manchester around 30 workers took a leaflet, with a postie telling WSWS reporters, “I’m against war and so are lots of comrades in there [Royal Mail]. I can’t see how we can stop it.” Another asked, “Do you think it [the conflict in Ukraine] will come to world war?”

Socialist Equality Party campaigners also spoke to protesters at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Albert Square, Manchester this month, where the Zelensky regime’s jailing of a socialist for opposing a NATO-sponsored imperialist war was immediately recognised as part of a wave of repression against anti-war sentiment in Britain.

Unite union Community branch member **John Pearson**, who attended the protest, is calling on his branch in Greater Manchester to oppose Bogdan’s jailing. The branch previously passed a resolution in 2024 unanimously demanding Syrotiuk’s freedom.

Pearson said, “I’m a member of the Unite Community branch for Greater Manchester. My union branch discussed the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk in May 2024, shortly after he was arrested.

“We are appalled to now hear that two years on the court has sentenced Bogdan to 15 years imprisonment on a charge of high treason under martial law with scant evidence, with no evidence of him having carried out any action that could remotely be described as treason. Bogdan has been imprisoned for writing articles

propounding the socialist principle that the working class of capitalist nations in conflict should support each other, should refuse to slaughter each other for the benefit of their respective national capitalist classes. We need workers’ unity against them.

“Nearly two million people have lost their lives on both sides in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and Bogdan’s position and the position of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists is absolutely correct. We must organise working class unity against war, and we must organise to turn the fight against our own national capitalist classes. We’ll be returning to this issue at our union meeting this month.

“We will take such further action as is necessary to demand the quashing of Bogdan’s sentences. We’re very impressed to see the tremendous campaign that he’s built up internationally, and we’ll be proud to play a small role in that campaign.”

Catherine is one of thousands arrested nationwide under anti-terrorism legislation since the proscription of the direct-action group Palestine Action. She is on bail after she was arrested for holding up a cardboard sign opposing the group’s proscription.

“I believe this young man is a global socialist,” Catherine said. “Half of us are on bail for terrorism through holding cardboard signs saying we support Palestine Action, and it seems a global strategy to shut up anybody who speaks out against the state, or against what’s going on locally at the moment with our leaders. It’s very scary. I think they call it the chill factor, don’t they, when they try to shut you up.

“But to arrest a load of old age pensioners, and a young man who’s speaking out against genocide and imperialism—it’s just fascism, it’s pure fascism. I was saying to my friend here, your father fought fascism, your grandfather fought fascism, so I have to carry on. I think this battle is going to go on for a long time.

“And then on the other hand, war makes a hell of a lot of money for a handful of people, so it’s in the billionaires’ interest to keep as many wars going globally—just as George Orwell prophesied, the endless war. That’s what we’re in, we’re in this dystopian nightmare at the moment.”

Mike who also attended the protest said, “They want to make an example of Bogdan. Bogdan and all political prisoners, the SOAS 2 and the thousands who have been arrested should be freed. The ruling class are trying to intimidate us into silence.

“It’s them [the leaders of the western countries] who are the terrorists, all the imperialist countries who are exploiting the working class around the world. Burnham [UK prime minister] is giving missiles to Ukraine and the blueprint so they can make their own. He’s the same as every other Labour bastard.”

Single parent and working mother of two **Erin** said, “People [like Bogdan] should not be in prison for trying to promote peace. I don’t know much about Ukraine but I’ll look into it,” she said, taking a WSWs leaflet calling for Bogdan’s release.

“Burnham is a Zionist. I think he’ll make a few small, insignificant changes [regarding the cost of living] and nothing will happen. New boss but same policies. I feel so angry, I feel like I’m shouting against the wall, watching televised genocide. The Labour Friends of Israel [parliamentary group backing Israel] are trying to keep that quiet.”

Former student **Ben**, who works in retail, said, “I read on the internet about Bogdan getting arrested for treason—15 years! And how he was a socialist, a journalist. And that they arrested him for allegedly being pro-Russia. Even though, when people looked into him, a lot of his work had been critical of Russia and the Russian invasion and Putin’s regime.

“So, it all seemed unfair to me when I read about it. Like the people in Gaza, the Ukrainians and the Russian soldiers all getting slaughtered day by day—it’s not even about them. They’re just all used, the soldiers, just fodder for it all.”

Asked what he thought were the causes of the war, Ben continued, “Power, that’s how it’s always been. Russia invades Ukraine because NATO wanted to push up against Russia. And Russia’s pushing back. Not to say it’s a legitimate pushback.

“And this guy, Bogdan, getting arrested, he’s just caught in Ukraine’s war. As countries go to war, I think they get anti-war dissidents and they start banging them

up. He’s just another victim of the war in the same way that the Russian soldiers and Ukrainian soldiers are.

“All I see is these people, these rich people, as you’d say, capitalists, bashing up against each other for power struggles. But they don’t die. None of them get hurt.”

Ben said Burnham was “following a similar path to [his predecessor Keir] Starmer. He’s just louder about it. He scrapped Thames Water nationalisation [after Burnham previously said he favoured taking it out of private ownership].”

Ben said he was interested to learn that the campaign for Bogdan’s freedom was part of an international movement to overthrow capitalism as the only answer to poverty, fascism and war, in the tradition of the genuine representatives of Marxism—Lenin and Trotsky—and not the “gangster” Stalin, as Ben referred to the latter.

Saad, an MSc student in Human Resource Management, spoke to WSWs reporters at a campaign stall in Manchester’s Rusholme district. “I heard about the case of Bogdan on X,” he said. “I believe everyone should have the right to exercise freedom of speech. It’s a basic human right, expressing his opinion—no war! What’s happening in Ukraine is not good, everything should be resolved peacefully.”

Saad said he would read up on the case and the causes of the war in Ukraine, expressing an interest in attending the SEP Zoom meeting, “Free Bogdan! Ukrainian Socialist, Anti-War Activist!”

The WSWs urges every reader to go to FreeBogdan.org and act:

- Sign the petition, and add a statement of support in your own words.
- Write to the court, in your own language and in Ukrainian, using the letter-writing tool. If you have written before, send your letter again with the Ukrainian translation.
- Donate to the campaign.
- Post your support on social media, and share the campaign’s posts.
- Share the site widely with your contacts, in your workplace and in your neighbourhood.



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