Unite Community members in Greater Manchester demand Bogdan Syrotiuk's immediate release from Ukrainian jail

Our reporters
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Members of the Greater Manchester Unite Community branch in northwest England have unanimously passed a resolution demanding freedom for Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, jailed for his opposition to the Zelensky regime and the NATO-led war in Ukraine.

The branch members were shocked to hear that, since their previous call in May last year for Bogdan's release, he has been sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Unite is one of Britain's largest trade unions with 1.2 million members. It operates a network of community branches that includes retirees, the unemployed and local activists.

Around 16 members of Unite's Greater Manchester Community branch voted on September 22 to adopt the following strongly worded resolution, proposed by Unite member John Pearson and seconded by Paul Morrison. Greater Manchester is a conurbation with a population of almost 3 million.

Unite members bought four copies of the pamphlet "Free Bogdan Syroiuk—socialist anti-war activist jailed in Ukraine" at the meeting.

The resolution passed is as follows:

> "Release Bogdan Syrotiuk, defend free speech!
> Greater Manchester Unite Community Branch:
> Recalls:
> —its resolution of 28th May 2024 to add the Branch's voice to global demands for the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a socialist and anti-war activist arrested and charged with "high treason."
> Notes:
> with horror that, after 2 years of pre-trial incarceration, Bogdan has been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. This is tantamount to a death sentence. His health was poor when he was arrested. He has been denied urgently needed medical treatment while in prison. At the United Nations Committee Against Torture's review of Ukraine in April 2025, experts cited overcrowding, inadequate access to food and water, the absence of independent medical examinations and a rising toll of deaths in custody.
> —that the prosecution case rested entirely on six articles Bogdan wrote for the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS), calling for working-class unity in Ukraine and Russia to end a conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.
> Believes:
> —that the imprisonment of Bogdan Syrotiuk is part of a wider clampdown to silence anti-war sentiment within Ukraine. More than 300,000 criminal cases have been opened against soldiers for desertion or absence without leave since 2022, with the majority in the past year. In 2025, 69 percent of Ukrainians told Gallup that the country should seek a negotiated end to the war.
> —that the defence of Bogdan is not dependent on agreement with his views, or those of the WSWS on the war. The basic principle is that no government has the right to criminalise freedom of speech, opposition to war or socialist politics. An injury to one is an injury to all.
> Resolves:
> —to forward this motion to the court in Pervomaisk which handed down this politically motivated sentence and the court of appeal, demanding that the sentence be annulled
> —to publicise Bogdan Syrotiuk's case against the media blackout, circulating the petition among members for Bogdan's immediate and unconditional release and to send a letter of support to the Free Bogdan campaign.
> —to present this motion to each of the Trades Union

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Councils to which the branch is affiliated.
Proposed: John Pearson
Seconded: Paul Morrison”

Following the branch meeting, Pearson spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* and shared the remarks he made to the meeting. After proposing the resolution above, he told the branch that he was “very, very pleased to read out a letter I received from Tony Greenstein”, whom he had approached to lend support for Bogdan.

Greenstein is a longstanding anti-Zionist activist, co-founder of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a Unite union member. Greenstein has been a victim of a sustained campaign of intimidation by the British state, including a police raid in 2023 on his home—seizing his phone and laptop and holding him for nine hours—and being charged under the Terrorism Act 2,000 in 2024.

Last month, a jury found Greenstein not guilty of inviting support for a proscribed organisation relating to social media posts following the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023

After thanking the Unite branch for the support it had afforded him, Greenstein wrote to Pearson that, “The allegation of ‘terrorism’ is being used in order to prevent solidarity with the Palestinians and those fighting against oppression and repressive regimes, such as the Kurds. Not surprisingly I did not receive any support from the General Secretary of our union, Sharon Graham. This is not surprising since Graham has given no support to the Palestinians throughout nearly three years of genocide.

“I am pleased to announce that I was nonetheless acquitted by a unanimous verdict of the jury after just two hours after the judge had threatened to cite me for contempt of court for ignoring her attempt to rule of [sic] evidence supporting me.

“I am also more than happy to support the campaign to free the anti-war socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. NATO is fighting a proxy war in Ukraine and is happy to sacrifice the lives of thousands of Ukrainian and Russian workers in the process.

“The gaoling of Bogdan for 15 years on a charge of treason is outrageous and symptomatic of a police state which cannot tolerate the free expression of opinion. The Ukrainian state under Zelensky has outlawed left-wing and socialist parties, repressed trade unions and is presently press-ganging people into fighting on behalf of NATO.

“The fight for freedom and democratic rights is an international one as Europe makes preparations for war with Russia. We are living in very dangerous times.”

Unite Community member Paul Morrison, who seconded the motion in support of Bogdan, condemned the pro-war, pro-austerity policies of new Labour prime minister Andy Burnham, who has continued the policy of his predecessor Keir Starmer in giving full support to the Zelensky regime’s war against Russia.

“I consider Burnham to be taking the same position as his predecessor and supporting Zionism and giving arms for Genocide,” he said. “Burnham is now also supporting Saudi Arabia with military aid, which will create a bigger conflict with Yemen. Both these points go against the recent motions passed at the TUC conference”, said Morrison.

Unite Community branch members in Greater Manchester have again taken a principled stand that workers and trade union branches everywhere should follow.

The demand for Syrotiuk’s release must spearhead a campaign by workers internationally against NATO’s reckless and escalating wars. The NATO war in Ukraine, led by the United States, Britain, France and Germany, threatens to erupt into a direct military conflict between nuclear-armed powers. It is part of a developing global war encompassing the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia, ultimately targeting China.

The WSWS urges every reader visit the campaign website 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.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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