Freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk! Stop political persecutions!

Statement by the party Union of Left Forces - For a New Socialism!
25 September 2026

This statement was submitted to the World Socialist Web Site *by Maxim Goldarb, the head of the Ukrainian "Union of Left Forces—For a New Socialism!" party. It was one of 11 opposition parties banned by the Zelensky government with the proclamation of martial law in March 2022. Maxim Goldarb has been persecuted and was forced to flee the country. To support the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk, sign the petition, make a donation and submit a statement.*

The ***"Union of Left Forces—For a New Socialism!"*** party protests the verdict against Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison on August 10, 2026, on charges of high treason. The court also ordered the confiscation of his property and the destruction of seized political literature. The defense filed an appeal on September 9.

The charges were based on his political publications, public statements and correspondence with the editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

At the same time, the investigation failed to prove espionage, the transfer of military information, sabotage or collaboration with the Russian armed forces. Moreover, a forensic linguistic analysis cited in the appeal materials found no calls for supporting Russian armed aggression in the publications examined.

This raises a fundamental question: **Can a political stance, criticism of the government and anti-war socialist views serve as grounds for charges of high treason and a 15-year prison sentence?**

We believe this issue cannot be viewed in isolation from the general state of political freedoms in Ukraine.

Since the outbreak of the full-scale war, Ukrainian authorities have drastically expanded the application of laws regarding high treason, collaborationism and other crimes against national security. According to UN data, by July 2025, approximately **20,000 war-related criminal cases** had been opened, and over 2,200 people were being held in official Ukrainian detention facilities in connection with such cases. The UN specifically noted instances where individuals were prosecuted for performing work to provide humanitarian relief, utility or construction services and other work during the occupation—activities that were lawful under international humanitarian law.

The scale of the application of legislation regarding "*collaborationism*" is also enormous. Between December 2024 and May 2025 alone, the UN recorded **609 prosecutions under Article 111-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, 604 of which resulted in convictions**. At the same time, the UN determined that some of those convicted were prosecuted for actions that could have been lawfully demanded by the occupying authorities under international humanitarian law.

We do not claim that every one of these cases constitutes political repression. However, **the 20,000 criminal cases and the widespread application of vague provisions regarding *"collaborationism"* necessitate particularly rigorous oversight to ensure that criminal law does not become a tool for punishing political stances.**

Simultaneously, there has been an unprecedented shrinking of the space available for legal political opposition.

In March 2022, Volodymyr Zelenskyy issued a decree enacting a decision by the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) to suspend the activities of a number of leftist and other opposition political parties, including our own. The authorities justified these measures by citing national security concerns.

The same decision instructed the Ministry of Justice

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to take steps to ban these parties. Subsequently, a criminal case was initiated against Maxim Goldarb, the leader of the **“Union of Left Forces – For a New Socialism!”** party, on purely political grounds.

Responsibility for the resulting political and legal system lies not with the “state” in the abstract, but primarily with the ?ountry’s political leadership.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy personally authorized the suspension of opposition parties' activities. His administration governs under martial law, a state of affairs in which elections are not held and the opportunities for legal political competition have been effectively eliminated.

This does not, however, provide grounds to automatically label every criminal case as political. However, this provides every reason to demand an exceptionally high standard of proof in cases where an individual is charged with high treason solely or primarily in connection with their political activities.

The Syrotiuk case represents precisely such a test.

If publications, translations, interviews, political speeches, and international editorial work are transformed into evidence of “high treason,” a highly dangerous precedent is set: criminal law begins to define not **what a person has done**, but **what political views they have expressed.**

Democracy cannot be defended by destroying political pluralism.

The mere fact of disagreeing with the government cannot be declared high treason.

The concept of “collaborationism” cannot be turned into a universal tool for persecuting individuals whose political stance differs from that of the state.

Nor can society be expected to place unquestioning trust in the judicial system when the state simultaneously bans opposition parties and prosecutes individual members of the opposition.

We demand:

— that the verdict against Bogdan Syrotiuk be overturned if the prosecution is unable to prove concrete actions constituting high treason;

— that he be granted a full and independent appeal hearing;

— an end to criminal punishment for political convictions, journalistic activities, publications, and the peaceful expression of anti-war or socialist views;

— an independent review of how laws regarding high treason and collaborationism are applied in cases involving political or civic activity rather than assistance to an armed adversary;

— an end to the practice of using martial law to indefinitely curtail political pluralism;

— that the existence of a legal political opposition be made possible and the equality of political views before the law be guaranteed.

We are under no obligation to agree with Bogdan Syrotiuk’s political views. But that is precisely why his case is of fundamental importance.

Freedom of speech does not exist for those who say what the authorities want to hear.

Political opposition does not exist for those who agree with the government.

The right to hold political convictions exists precisely when those beliefs are inconvenient for the state.

A 15-year prison sentence for political activity and publications is an issue that demands a comprehensive resolution during the appeal process.

Freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Freedom of political convictions.

Freedom for political opposition.

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