Stand up for the freedom of Bogdan Syrotiuk!

Open letter to the leadership of Germany's Left Party

Johannes Stern
30 September 2026

We are publishing below an open letter to the leadership of Germany's Left Party. It was sent on September 30 to Ines Schwerdtner and Luigi Pantisano, co-chairs of the Left Party, as well as to Heidi Reichinnek and Sören Pellmann, co-chairs of the Left Party parliamentary group in the Bundestag.

Dear Ms. Schwerdtner, dear Mr. Pantisano,

Dear Ms. Reichinnek, dear Mr. Pellmann,

We already informed you on August 21 about the case of Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk. Since you have not yet commented on the case, I am publicly calling on you to take a position and campaign for his immediate release.

On August 10, 2026, the 27-year-old Syrotiuk, who has been imprisoned for more than two years, was sentenced by the Pervomaisk City District Court in the Mykolaiv region to 15 years in prison for "high treason under martial law." His lawyers have appealed the verdict.

The sentencing of a young socialist and opponent of war to 15 years in prison is a grave attack on fundamental democratic rights. According to the defense, the court record contains no evidence of espionage or sabotage, the transmission of military information, or collaboration with Russian armed forces. Instead, the case centered on Syrotiuk's political convictions, his public statements, his articles for the *World Socialist Web Site* and his international political collaboration. According to the appeal, a forensic linguistic analysis used in the proceedings likewise found no calls in the publications examined to support Russian aggression.

Bogdan Syrotiuk has spoken out against war, nationalism and the glorification of far-right Ukrainian nationalists and fascists. At the same time, he has opposed Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Putin regime and argued for the international unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against the war.

At stake is an elementary democratic principle: an opponent of war and a socialist must not be sentenced to 15 years in prison for his political convictions, his journalistic activity and his opposition to the government. The right to criticize a government and its war policy, to publish political articles and to associate internationally with like-minded people is among the most fundamental democratic rights.

These rights must be defended especially in wartime. War must not be used as a pretext for treating political opposition as a crime against the state. If political articles and journalistic collaboration are made the basis for a conviction for "high treason," this concerns the rights of every journalist, every political activist and every opponent of war.

International support for Bogdan Syrotiuk is growing. Lawyers, historians, academics, artists, workers and political organizations in numerous countries have called for his release. In France, *La France insoumise* has publicly condemned the verdict and declared that political differences with Syrotiuk's views can never justify a 15-year prison sentence. In Britain, the *Stop the War Coalition* is demanding Syrotiuk's immediate release and has called on the British government to intervene on his behalf. The international petition for his freedom has now gathered more than 8,000 signatures.

The Left Party claims to defend democratic rights, freedom of expression and the protection of the politically persecuted. In a case such as this, a clear position must therefore be expected from it.

I therefore call on you to:

•Publicly condemn Bogdan Syrotiuk's 15-year prison sentence and demand that the verdict be overturned and

© World Socialist Web Site

that he be released immediately.

• Actively press the German government, the Ukrainian government and the responsible Ukrainian authorities for his release.

• Demand the full protection of his democratic and legal rights and make clear that political opposition to war and journalistic activity must not be criminalized as “high treason.”

Bogdan Syrotiuk has been imprisoned for more than two years and has now been sentenced to 15 years in prison. At stake is the freedom of a young man who is being persecuted for his political convictions and his opposition to war.

The Left Party must take a stand against this injustice. Publicly use the full political weight of your party to fight for Bogdan Syrotiuk’s freedom.

Bogdan Syrotiuk must be released.

Yours sincerely,

Johannes Stern

Editor of the German-language *World Socialist Web Site*

Member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Equality Party

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site