

University and College Union members at Manchester Metropolitan University back campaign for release of Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
16 October 2026

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in northwest England have passed a resolution demanding freedom for Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. Bogdan was jailed for 15 years for opposing the war in Ukraine and calling for a united struggle of Russian and Ukrainian workers and youth.

A majority voted to pass the resolution at an online meeting, with 15 for, three against and seven abstentions. At a smaller in-person meeting the next day the resolution was passed unanimously.

The resolution, “Release Bogdan Syrotiuk, defend political speech!” stated:

This branch supports the international campaign demanding the immediate release of 27-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk, a socialist and anti-war activist sentenced to 15 years in Ukraine for “high treason”.

We note that the case rests entirely on protected political expression, via six articles he wrote for the *World Socialist Web Site*. These articles call for the unity of the working-class across Ukraine and Russia to end a conflict that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. A 65-page report by Yuri Irkhin, one of Ukraine’s leading criminologists, examined Bogdan Syrotiuk’s writings and found in them no statements, phrases, sentences, or word combinations supporting any actions of the Russian military. The court did not refute, and did not even address, this report.

We note that the 15-year sentence against Bogdan Syrotiuk is tantamount to a death sentence. His health was poor when he was arrested more than two years ago. 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.

We note 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.

We believe support for this motion in defence of Bogdan is not dependent on agreement with his views, or those of the WSWWS on the conflict or other issues. 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. Political expression is protected by the Constitution of Ukraine, and by the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Ukraine is a signatory.

We therefore resolve to: forward the motion to the court in Pervomaisk (translated into Ukrainian as per the of the court) which handed down this politically motivated sentence, and to the court of appeal in support of a legal appeal submitted on September 9 for the sentence to be annulled, and to circulate a link to the petition among branch members calling for Bogdan’s release, which will add our branch’s voice to the growing international campaign attempting to secure his freedom.

The motion’s Proposer Dr. Chris Porter is a senior lecturer in sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). His research areas include

globalisation, class, culture, politics and sport. He is the author of *Supporter Ownership in English Football* (2019).

The MMU is the fifth largest university in the UK with 44,000 students and over 5,100 staff members in four faculties (Science and Engineering, Arts and Humanities, Business and Law, Health and Education).

Of the in-person meeting, Porter told the WSWS, “Branch members discussed how Bogdan’s case punctures the dominant media narrative on Ukraine, with the term ‘meat grinder’ used to describe the grim reality of the conflict. Connections were also drawn with the repression of socialist, anti-war speech elsewhere, including the criminalisation of protest in support of Gaza, and the ominous plans of UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham to set up a National Centre for Information Defence, thus underscoring the importance of speaking up for victims of political repression whenever and wherever we see it.”

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