

IYSSE meeting in Sri Lanka demands freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our Reporters
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a successful online meeting on Tuesday, October 13 as part of the international campaign to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. Imprisoned by the fascist government of President Volodymyr Zelensky, Bogdan was sentenced to 15 years in prison on August 9 on concocted charges of high treason.

He is the leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), which continues the political struggle of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, leaders of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. Bogdan's "crime" for which he is imprisoned is opposing NATO's war in Ukraine against Russia and calling for the unity of the working class in both countries against the war.

The IYSSE in Sri Lanka conducted an extensive campaign among university students and workers in the lead-up to the online meeting. The IYSSE event was live-streamed simultaneously on the Socialist Equality Party's (SEP) Facebook page in Sinhala and Tamil. The Zoom meeting received some 1,300 views and 137 shares. Around 50 participants joined the meeting.

Sakuntha Hirimutugoda, an IYSSE leader, explained the brutal treatment to which Bogdan had been subjected and the prospect of a lengthy prison term after he has already spent more than two years in a Ukrainian prison. Bogdan was arrested by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the country's state security service, on April 25, 2024.

Hirimutugoda said: "The case of Comrade Bogdan shows the fraudulent nature of the Zelensky regime's claim that this war is being fought for 'democracy.' Bogdan himself told the International May Day online rally in 2023 that the anti-Russia war was widely discredited among Ukrainian workers and youth."

The report to the meeting was presented by Kapila Fernando, the convener of the IYSSE. He said that the sentencing of this political fighter was a warning of the preparations being made by the major powers and their lackeys to suppress growing opposition among workers and young people to imperialist war, which is now in its initial stages.

This young Trotskyist symbolises the growing opposition to the war in Ukraine and internationally, while "Zelensky's

government has demonstrated its fascist contempt for democratic rights."

Fernando went on to point to the advanced stage of the war, which poses the threat of a direct nuclear conflict provoked between imperialist powers ruthlessly pursuing their global geopolitical agendas and the oligarchic capitalist regime in Russia.

While the Putin government threatens to use nuclear weapons, NATO leaders continue to supply arms and financial assistance to the Ukrainian regime to attack Russia. "The statements that they [NATO leaders] are 'not afraid' of Putin's threat to launch a nuclear attack mean that even the danger of nuclear catastrophe will not stop their imperialist campaign to open up Russia for plunder. However, humanity is being exposed to the danger of nuclear annihilation."

The speaker explained that, although the US under President Donald Trump has tactical differences with the European powers in relation to Russia, Washington also seeks to plunder the resources of Russia's vast territory. Its central aim is to subjugate China. Its aggression against Iran to dominate the Middle East is part of this drive and of the developing world war.

Fernando added: "It is essential to build an international anti-war movement based on the program of international socialism. Young people must take the initiative in this struggle.

"Under the political leadership of the ICFI, Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk and the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists took this initiative and fought for this perspective."

Pointing to the essential perspective underlying the work of the ICFI, Fernando explained that the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 had been won on the basis of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The Bolsheviks fought for the unity of the international working class against the First World War.

Fernando went on to explain the reactionary character of the ruling classes in South Asia.

In India, the Hindu-supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the opposition Congress Party have become principal supporters of US war plans in the Indo-Pacific against China.

Emphasising the pro-imperialist character of the Janatha

Vimukthi Peramuna/National People's Power (JVP/NPP) government in Sri Lanka, Fernando said that it had failed to condemn US-Israeli aggression against Iran and had not opposed the Israeli's genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza.

The speaker cited the parade of senior US officials, including military commanders, welcomed by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. During the latest visit, Lieutenant General Joel B. "JB" Vowell, Deputy Commanding General of US Army Pacific, discussed "expand training, interoperability, disaster preparedness and defence cooperation."

Fernando explained the perspective of the pseudo-left Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) in Sri Lanka is seeking peace within the imperialist system.

"The FSP recently issued a statement proposing that the government initiates discussions among South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to reinstate the 1971 United Nations declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, in order to avert the danger of world war!

"They promote the illusion that the imperialists will bow to these 'peace' initiatives. According to this pseudo-left group, there is still room for peace within capitalism itself. It has also proposed that the problems facing Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Russia and many other countries targeted by imperialist aggression could be solved by establishing such zones of peace."

Fernando urged workers and young people to reject the FSP and other pseudo-left groups that claim war can be averted by appealing to the imperialist powers. These groups deny the fundamental contradictions of imperialism that drive the major powers towards war. They make these claims even as the imperialist powers have already opened fronts in the developing world war, including the war in Ukraine against Russia and the aggression against Iran, aimed at dominating the Middle East and targeting China, Fernando explained.

"The impact of the war is already being felt through the deepening economic crisis, attacks on living conditions and the government's integration into the US war machine. We urge young people to turn to the working class in Sri Lanka and South Asia to build an anti-war movement. Supporting the campaign to 'Free Bogdan Syrotyuk' is an essential part of this struggle," he said.

"Bogdan Syrotyuk can be freed only by mobilising workers, young people and students on the basis of an international socialist perspective and a program of action," Fernando concluded.

A participant in the meeting asked about the future impact on Sri Lanka of bilateral military agreements with the US, such as the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which the JVP/NPP government continues to uphold.

Fernando made clear that under agreements such as ACSA, the US military is allowed to use infrastructure throughout Sri

Lanka, including airports, and obtain fuel in the event of war.

"However," Fernando stated, "our concern is not just about the impact on Sri Lanka, but also about the consequences for working people and young people throughout the region. It is part of the US military network across the globe.

"South Asian ruling elites and their governments are willing partners in these imperialist preparations and demonstrate their allegiance to imperialism. Only the independent mobilisation of the working class, uniting it across national and ethnic divisions and breaking from every faction of the bourgeoisie and its lackeys, can halt the threat of war and put an end to the brutal living and social conditions prevailing in these countries."

Perera, a young doctor working in the Kandy area who participated in the meeting commented: "The main thing I understood from listening to the meeting was how greatly the danger of a nuclear world war has increased. No country in the world is holding any discussions aimed at stopping the war. They are all moving towards war. No country can remain neutral.

"The claim that Sri Lankan President is maintaining neutrality is false. Even if they claim to be neutral, they have no program to confront the pressure exerted on them by the imperialists.

"I had heard that Lenin opposed the war during the First World War. Through the meeting, I learned that the 1917 Russian Revolution compelled the imperialist countries to bring the war to an end. This program is relevant for today."

Perera pointed out that all international organisations, including the United Nations, were supporting the war and remaining silent. He also emphasised that the problems confronting humanity, including war, cannot be resolved within "one country."



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