

ICFI mounts international pickets demanding the Ukrainian government release Bogdan Syrotiuk

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Demand freedom for Bogdan! Fill out the petition at the bottom of this statement.

On Thursday, June 13, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) held internationally coordinated pickets of Ukrainian embassies and consulates in a number of major cities to protest the arbitrary arrest and detention of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist organization in the former Soviet Union.

The pickets were held sequentially in Istanbul, Paris, London, Berlin, Washington D.C., Toronto, Canberra and Sydney, with the final two taking place on the morning of June 14 local time in Australia.

At each picket, a leading representative of the ICFI read the Open Letter from the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board calling for the immediate release of Bogdan, and delivered or attempted to deliver the letter to the embassy.

The letter, a video of which has now been viewed over 10,000 times on Twitter/X, summarizes the persecution of Bogdan and calls for his freedom. On April 25, 2024, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) arrested Bogdan on trumped-up charges of treason, distorting his principled opposition to both the Ukrainian and Russian governments as being “pro-Russian.” The Ukrainian government also leveled the same charge against the *World Socialist Web Site*, which is now banned across Ukraine. The letter notes:

The state police of Ukraine know very well that they cannot substantiate their charge of treason against this young and courageous socialist. They must, therefore, resort to the sort of lies used by the Stalinist regime of the Soviet Union in the era of the Terror and Moscow Trials, when it denounced its Trotskyist opponents as agents of Nazi Germany. Notwithstanding the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism in Ukraine, the methods and spirit of the Stalinist police agencies live on. ...

Bogdan Syrotiuk is a victim of your government’s lawlessness. His arrest on April 25 occurred amidst numerous reports in the international media of rising

opposition to the war among Ukrainian workers and youth. It is obvious that the frame-up of Syrotiuk on treason charges is aimed at intimidating opponents of the war, which your government is waging in the interests of Ukraine’s capitalist elite and its imperialist allies.

The response of the Ukrainian government to the ICFI’s pickets and efforts to deliver the letter were politically revealing.

The day began with the first picket in Istanbul, where a consulate worker accepted the letter from Ula? Ate?çi, a leading member of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group). Ate?çi explained that the letter must be delivered to Nedilskyi Roman, the Consul General in Istanbul, and the worker agreed to do so.

It is clear that the receipt of this letter and its review by Ukrainian officials triggered an immediate and significant response. By the time the next pickets took place in Paris, London, Berlin, and Washington D.C., instructions had evidently been sent by the Zelensky regime to embassy officials to refuse acceptance of the letter and drop all formalities.

A similar scene unfolded at each of the embassies in the four capitals of the world’s leading imperialist powers, where officials violated standard practices, refusing to accept the letter or send anyone to speak with the ICFI representatives.

In Paris, an embassy official came out and spoke to a policeman on guard outside, who informed Alex Lantier, national secretary of the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (PES), that the embassy would not receive the letter.

In London, Socialist Equality Party (UK) National Secretary Chris Marsden was greeted with silence. In a video recording of the picket, shadows are seen in the window next to the embassy’s front door, but no one exits the building.

In Berlin, no one answered the door after Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) National Secretary Christoph Vandreier rang the bell. Before dropping the letter through a mailbox by the embassy entrance, Vandreier commented:

It is obviously the case that the members of the embassy, who can be seen from here outside, are hiding in their embassy. They are not even willing to receive this letter,

which we have just read out, because they know that the charges against Bogdan Syrotiuk and his arrest and detention have no factual basis and because they know that the movement for his release is growing every day.

In Washington D.C., the center of world imperialism, an embassy official cracked the door open briefly and immediately slammed it shut after seeing Socialist Equality Party (US) vice presidential candidate Jerry White. Shortly thereafter, Secret Service agents arrived and informed White that embassy personnel called to inform them that they would not take the letter, which must instead be mailed to the embassy.

In a video statement made after this exchange, White said:

This is just an indication of the absolute cowardice of the Ukrainian regime. It's incapable of answering the charges that this is a crude frame-up against a courageous socialist, whose only "crime" is fighting to unite the Ukrainian and Russian workers together against this horrific war. They have no answer to the exposure of their lies that Bogdan and the *World Socialist Web Site* are "agents of Putin" because of our long, proud history of opposing Stalinism and the oligarchical regime in Russia.

After White read the letter, Mack Trucks autoworker Will Lehman, a leader of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), issued a video statement calling on the international working class to come to the defense of Bogdan. Lehman also exposed the role of the union bureaucracies, which have fully supported the war in Ukraine, stating:

Here in the US, the Biden administration and the corrupt United Auto Workers bureaucracy talk about turning the auto plants into an "arsenal of democracy." Bogdan's arrest proves that Ukraine is no democracy. There are no elections, there are no opposition political parties, and if you speak up on behalf of workers and oppose the war like Bogdan did, you get thrown in jail. If Biden and UAW President Shawn Fain were telling the truth, they'd say they want to turn the American auto plants into an "arsenal for dictatorship."

This pattern of embassies deliberately ignoring the ICFI representatives was only broken in Canberra, a remote, backwater embassy in Australia's sparsely populated capital. Either because the embassy officials had not been informed, or they had realized that their tactic had backfired as social media posts of the ICFI pickets circulated widely online, the letter was accepted. At a small Ukrainian consulate in Toronto, ICFI representatives were also able to deliver the letter, likely for the same reasons.

The refusal of the Ukrainian embassies in the US, UK, Germany

and France to receive the letter or even interact with ICFI representatives was clearly a conscious decision made by the Ukrainian government.

The decision of the Ukrainian officials to "hide in their embassies," as Vandreier stated, confirms the central allegations of the letter itself, that the arrest of Bogdan is a political frame-up aimed at intimidating all opposition to the war in Ukraine. The officials refused to accept the letter because they know it is an unanswerable indictment of their criminal regime.

Furthermore, the conduct of the Ukrainian officials is a damning exposure of the anti-democratic and fascistic character of the Zelensky regime, which has imposed martial law, suspended elections and arrested thousands of opponents of the war. Such a government does not tolerate public protests, which would be met with brutal suppression were they to take place in Ukraine.

The response makes clear the determination of the Ukrainian government and its imperialist backers to maintain the frame-up of Bogdan, into which they have now invested a great deal politically.

The international pickets took place on the same day as the G7 summit opened in Italy, hosted by Giorgia Meloni, the fascist political heiress of Benito Mussolini. At the summit, US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a new 10-year security agreement, while the G7 powers agreed to provide Ukraine with another \$50 billion in funding.

In recent weeks, the US and other NATO powers have given Ukraine permission to fire NATO-produced weapons into Russia, while multiple NATO leaders have openly discussed sending thousands of NATO troops directly into Ukraine. The imperialist powers are relentlessly escalating the war with Russia, heightening to unprecedented levels the danger of a nuclear conflagration.

In this context, the fight to free Bogdan Syrotiuk acquires enormous political significance. It is the spearhead of a developing international socialist, anti-war movement. Thursday's pickets must be seen as an important step forward in the building of an international working class campaign demanding Bogdan's freedom and an end to imperialist war. With or without the acknowledgement of the Ukrainian government, this campaign will continue.

The pickets exemplified the necessity for an international campaign to stop imperialist war and all attacks on democratic rights. The fight to free Bogdan, as with the fight against war, genocide, dictatorship, climate change and pandemics, can only be waged on an international level.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the ICFI appeal to all of our readers and supporters to become involved in this campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk, stop the war in Ukraine, end the genocide in Gaza, and deepen the fight for world socialist revolution. Sign the petition to demand Bogdan's freedom and join the campaign to secure his release today!



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