

Sri Lankan workers and youth support public meeting to demand release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
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Over recent weeks, members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka have been campaigning for the upcoming public meeting, “Free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.” We urge our readers to attend this event, which will be held at the National Library Auditorium, Independent Square Avenue in Colombo 07, on Sunday July 7 at 3 p.m.

Bogdan, a leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), has been imprisoned by Ukraine’s fascistic Zelensky regime since April 25 on fraudulent charges of “high treason,” and aiding the Russian government.

These outrageous and crude lies have been hurled against the 25-year-old Ukrainian socialist because he, and the YGBL, oppose the US-NATO war against Russia and are fighting to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers on a socialist program against the capitalist oligarchs in both countries. The YGBL is affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

On June 13, the ICFI held internationally coordinated pickets at Ukrainian embassies and consulates in the US, UK, Turkey, Germany, France, Canada and Australia to protest the arbitrary arrest and detention of Bogdan and present “An Open Letter to the Ukrainian government: Release Bogdan Syrotiuk!” Ukrainian embassies in the US, UK, Germany and France, however, refused to accept the letter.

There is no Ukrainian embassy in Sri Lanka and so the SEP is holding a public meeting in Colombo to intensify international action to demand Bogdan’s release.

Campaigners have received important support in northern Jaffna where the SEP and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, has a powerful base of support among minority Tamil people for its consistent and principled opposition to the three-decade communalist wars waged by successive Sri Lankan governments against the separatist

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Tigers.

We publish below statements made by workers and students from across the island—Colombo, Jaffna and Hambantota—and the Healthcare Workers Action Committee demanding Bogdan’s immediate release and the dropping of the bogus charges.

Healthcare Workers Action Committee in Sri Lanka

The Healthcare Workers Action Committee in Sri Lanka convened a special meeting last week to discuss the escalating assault on democratic rights by the Zelensky government and to pass a resolution demanding Bogdan’s release. The resolution condemned his arrest and noted the “thoroughly repressive situation in the country [Ukraine] which prevented Bogdan from obtaining adequate legal representation to fight the false charges against him.”

The Health Workers Action Committee, which includes doctors, nurses and health assistants, noted that the “struggle to stop the war must be based on the working class, youth and students with a socialist program.” It explained that the political fight being waged by Bogdan and his YGBL was based on this program and stated, “The freedom of Bogdan is a significant step in the fight against war and for socialism.”

K. Ruban, a software engineering student at BCAS (British College of Applied Studies) in Jaffna

Innocent individuals are being made to sacrifice their lives for the imperialist interests of the US and NATO in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world. I doubt whether the people who are dying from wars today, including the genocide in Gaza, know exactly why they are dying.

In his opposition to war, Bogan exposed the predatory motives of the imperialist countries. He has fought not only for the future of Ukrainian youth but for all of us. He should be freed.

An IT sector worker in Kokuvil, Jaffna

I didn't know about this comrade before. Wars are the worst thing for humanity and his fight against such a war is genuine. It is not acceptable that he was arrested by the Ukrainian government, and I strongly condemn it.

The Ukrainian government has stripped his democratic rights and I agree that these vicious attacks are worldwide phenomena.

S. Nivashan, a Jaffna University science faculty student

Bogdan has exposed the real interests behind the war. If they [the Zelensky government] let him exercise his freedom of speech, then their war effort will be exposed, and they would be unable to gather support.

Anyone who listens to him will agree with him and this is the very reason they are framing him as a Russian agent. This is false. Bogdan has exposed the Putin's regime, as well as the Ukrainian government which is supported by NATO. The international unity of the working class must be forged to win his freedom and for the termination of the war.

Sanduni, third-year zoology student from the Jaffna University science faculty

I don't like any war and we should never forget the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I know that a nuclear war would cause the worst consequences, yet all these imperialist powers seem to ignore this.

We have faced a war and went through a lot of hard things. But after coming to Jaffna, I now realise that the Tamil people underwent much more hardships than us in other areas.

We lost a lot of lives—Tamil and Sinhala youth. They fought and died, not for their own interests but because they were pitted against each other by the capitalist politicians. I think the same goes with Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has imprisoned Bogdan Syrotiuk because his activism. He tells workers and young people that "this is not your war." I demand he be released forthwith.

Nelum Chinthaka, a young farmer from Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka

I understand that there is no solution in groveling to the capitalists. We need to build a workers' and peasant' movement. Bogdan fought for socialism and against war. This brave Ukrainian socialist fought to build an anti-war movement. People of the world must raise their voice against this injustice and demand his release from prison unconditionally.

As far as I know, America intervenes and makes war all over the world. Thousands of lives have been lost through it. Its intervention in the Middle East has been disastrous. The US and European countries are behind the war in Ukraine. Even in the war in Sri Lanka, countries like the US, helped

the Sri Lankan government. That is why a hundred thousand Tamils were killed in Mullivaikkal [in the Northern Province].

Aslam, a young mechanic from Meethotamulla, a Colombo suburb

Bogdan fought to defend democratic rights and just because of that the Zelensky government has arrested him to shut his mouth and thus to destroy him...

The [Ukrainian embassies who refused to accept the ICFI's Open Letter] may have been influenced by the US and Zelensky government. This is not democracy when they don't even accept such a protest letter. They do not allow us to express our opinions. There must be a fight to get Bogdan out.

Kandambi, a worker from Ragama, north of Colombo

Everyone should vehemently condemn the Zelensky government in Ukraine for its arrest and detention of Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leading political activist of Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, a Trotskyist organisation active in the former Soviet Union. The obvious factor in this situation is that the life of this young socialist is in danger.

Young political activists like Bogdan should be commended. We here in Sri Lanka also should join to this international campaign for the freedom of Bogdan. We should denounce the Ukrainian government for keeping him under arrest and blocking his right to free expression. Meanwhile, we should ask foreign embassies in this country to raise this issue with the Ukrainian government.

Immediate freedom for Bogdan and the dropping of all the allegations against him! Let us fight and protest the blocking of his right to free speech! Stand up with this protest throughout South Asia, including Sri Lanka! Value and fight for political freedom!



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