

New Frame-up Attempt Against Vitrenko in Ukraine

Feb. 10—Ukrainian economist and former MP, Dr. Natalia Vitrenko, appealed today to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, to take action against the “defamation, intimidation, persecution, and discrediting”, to which Vitrenko and her political party are being subjected in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In a video posted Feb. 8, titled “Ukrainian Terror instead of European Democracy,” Vitrenko presented the latest evidence that the Ukraine Security Service (SBU) is attempting to silence her through a politically motivated frame-up on criminal charges of separatism. Ukrainian law defines as a crime “infringement of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.” The law was instituted after the U.S.-backed coup that overthrew Ukraine’s elected President Victor Yanukovich, the third anniversary of which comes on Feb. 22.

On Oct. 28, 2016, the offices of Vitrenko’s Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU) were raided and occupied by paramilitary forces, acting in a real estate dispute involving the building’s landlord. The contents of the office property of the PSPU, its newspaper, as-

sociated organizations, and individual members were carted off and sequestered by the SBU. In November, Vitrenko had warned that the SBU could be combing through the confiscated computer files for evidence to use in reviving a 2014 criminal investigation of the Gift of Life women’s NGO, and Vitrenko personally as its head, on false charges of “infringing the territorial integrity of Ukraine.” This is Article 110 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, which carries a penalty of 10 years in prison.

Dr. Vitrenko was interrogated by the SBU twice in 2014, regarding their charges that the Gift of Life organization had received Russian funds for the purpose of engaging in what some media maliciously depicted as “propaganda work to discredit the Ukrainian government authorities, provoke armed conflict between different layers of the population of Ukraine, incite ethnic hatred, and provide informational support for conducting ‘referenda’ in Ukraine’s eastern regions.” In April 2015, after Vitrenko had strongly refuted the charges during her interrogation, and the investigation had languished for a year, the Glavcom news agency (glavcom.ua) fanned its flames again, with several articles

citing SBU “suspicions” about Vitrenko’s receiving money from the Russian Foreign Ministry-run Fund for the Support and Defense of the Rights of Compatriots Residing Abroad. The allegations date to May 2014, when the bank accounts of Gift of Life were frozen. According to Ukrainian media, this was done “in the framework of an SBU investigation of funds transfers through Ukrinbank, intended for persons suspected of infringement of the territorial integrity and inviolability of Ukraine.” A flood of media reports named Vitrenko as a major sponsor of separatists and terrorists, which are broad categories used by the current Ukrainian authorities against their political opponents.



Natalia Vitrenko at a rally of her party, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine.

www.vitrenko.org

The PSPU said in a statement on April 8, 2015:

It is no accident, that this falsehood has been disseminated. The regime brought to power by the Euromaidan is discrediting itself through economic collapse, social genocide, corruption, and its inability to establish peace and preserve the territorial integrity of the country or realize the promised European values. Natalia Vitrenko offered facts to prove that the ‘suspicions’ are invalid and the statements false. But efforts to defame her and shape a negative view of her on the part of the public are continuing, through the media.

Once again at the end of 2016, it appears that the SBU did not find what it wanted in the material seized during the raid on PSPU headquarters. Instead, on Feb. 4, Vitrenko learned through an article in Glavcom with the incendiary headline “Court seizes property of organization headed by Vitrenko: infringement of the territorial integrity of Ukraine suspected,” that the SBU is plunging ahead with its case, based on entirely fake evidence. The article claimed that on Jan. 23, a Kiev court, having reviewed a motion filed by an SBU investigator, had ordered the seizure of property belonging to Gift of Life. The court order, however, listed property confiscated at a different location in Kiev, and to which

the Gift of Life organization had no connection whatsoever: tents, sleeping bags, bottles (“Are they trying to make it sound like a Molotov cocktail factory?” Vitrenko asks in her new video), and boxes of dried pasta.

Pointing out that the Ukrainian Constitution guarantees citizens protection against false accusations, Vitrenko, in the video, details what the human rights defense activity of Gift of Life (founded in 2000) actually was in 2012-14, at which point it had to cease operations because the SBU caused its accounts to be frozen. She wages a polemic in the video, that if her economic program had been adopted by Ukraine in the mid-1990s, when as a member of Parliament, she issued it in opposition to International Monetary Fund-prescribed deregulation and privatization, Ukraine would have been a thriving nation today; there would have been no economic hardship, such as made people fall for the “better life in Europe” slogans of the coup organizers, and thus there would have been no coup, no loss of Crimea, and no uprising in the Donbass leading to the deaths of 10,000 people.

Far from “infringing” anything, Vitrenko states that her program would have protected Ukraine and guaranteed its future prosperity in cooperation with Eurasian development overall.

Vitrenko has demanded a retraction of the Feb. 4 article on the Glavcom website. The text of her appeal to Mogherini follows.