

To President of the Republic of Lithuania

Dalia Grybauskaitė

Your Excellency,

The Jewish Community of Lithuania is greatly concerned about the ideas expressed by Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Ažubalis, that incite discord between Lithuanians and Jews.

Items appearing in the mass media have indicated that minister A. Ažubalis stated that, "everyone already knows" who needs this law (re Lithuanian citizenship) the most, and that he explained that it was the Jews born in Lithuania who are pushing it forward. The politician also let it be understood that this is how they hope to more easily retrieve their former property.

One of the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and of the minister, is to represent the Lithuanian state abroad. Can a minister with such attitudes represent a state, and does the state deserve such a minister?

The minister misleads the Lithuanian public. Individuals who did not have Lithuanian citizenship by December 31, 2001, lost the means to retrieve their former property. Thus neither an existing nor a newly passed law would grant the means to

retrieve property, even in the event that Jews were allowed to become Lithuanian citizens.

Neither the existing Lithuanian citizenship law nor the proposal for a new law are favourable to Jews. First of all, Jewish former prisoners of concentration camps and ghettos are not included in the category of individuals with the right to a non fixed-term for preservation of Lithuanian citizenship (unlike deportees and political prisoners).

The law on citizenship in the Republic of Lithuania, and the proposal for a new law grants separate, special rights for ethnic Lithuanians. Apparently the words "of Lithuanian descent" have nothing in common with Jews - Lithuanian citizens. "An individual deemed to be a person of Lithuanian descent is one with parents or grandparents, or with one parent or grandparent, who are or were Lithuanian, and who calls him/herself Lithuanian." We believe that in the case of other European Union citizens - Germans for example - a statement like "a citizen of German descent is a German" would wreak havoc not only in the sphere of law-making, but in the life of the society

itself, and that the generator of such an idea would be punishable by law.

Meanwhile in our state, the Minister of Foreign Affairs gives himself the right to consider out loud what the Jews, "who took advantage of everything", consider useful for themselves. At the same time, the minister's party colleagues suggest that they and the Jewish Community of Lithuania create a Litvak heritage forum and a Litvak virtual museum, and invite all world Jews, emigrants from Lithuania, to unite.

Given such a political situation, the Jewish Community of Lithuania will be forced to forego acceptance of such proposals. In our opinion, the honourable minister A. Ažubalis should apologise for his statements, for they are unquestionably statements that incite discord among nations.

This letter has the unanimous approval of twenty-one board members who attended a meeting of the Board of the Jewish Community of Lithuania on October 14, 2010.

Respectfully,
Dr. Simonas Alperavičius
Chairman
of Jewish Community of Lithuania