

Children under 18 suffered the highest poverty rate, 22% compared with adults and the elderly

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Lithuania's then-foreign minister Vygaudas Usackas visits Yad Vashem in 2009

“Worst of all, the Vilnius government is trying to minimize crimes and collaboration by Lithuanians against the Jews”

— Dr. Efraim Zuroff



Lithuania Rep Nixed By Yad Vashem

The head of the Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel expressed satisfaction that Yad Vashem axed Lithuania's ambassador to Israel from a program commemorating Baltic victims of the Holocaust, but also criticized the commemoration itself, saying it was part of a campaign by the Lithuanian government to downplay its role in the Holocaust.

In contrast to Western Europe, where local citizens often sufficed with delivering Jewish neighbors to deportation stations or betraying their hiding places, in Baltic States such as Lithuania, local Nazi collaborators often killed Jews themselves.

“I've been very critical of Yad Vashem for years,” said Joseph Melamed, a survivor of the Kovno Ghetto who fought with the partisans against the Nazis during World War II. “Yad Vashem is supposed to be a nonpolitical body, but they have participated in all kinds of political activities. For instance, they were scheduled to participate in a conference in the Lithuanian parliament in June. What are they doing in the Lithuanian parliament?” asked Melamed.

Melamed said that Lithuanian officials ignore the role ordinary Lithuanians played in the Holocaust. More than twenty years after

gaining independence from the Soviet Union, the country has never prosecuted anybody for murdering Jews, and little has come from attempts to retrieve stolen community and individual property.

“The Lithuanians have made a circus out of it all. I don't want to play this game with them,” said Melamed.

Melamed's current clash with Yad Vashem began when the Lithuanian government considered filing a libel suit against Melamed's organization after it posted a list of Lithuanian war criminals on its website. The list included nine individuals the Lithuanians consider to be war heroes. He contends Lithuania continues to harass Jewish Lithuanian Holocaust survivors, accusing them of war crimes. Professor Dovid Katz, who taught Yiddish literature at Vilnius University from 1999 to 2010 and now coordinates the *Defending History* website, says those charges have never been substantiated.

Dr. Efraim Zuroff, head of Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem branch, said the inclusion of any Lithuanian representative at the Yad Vashem ceremony would have been “outrageous.”

“The Lithuanian government is the one most responsible for promoting the symmetry between Communism and the Holocaust, and for promoting the concept of equivalence — that the Holocaust was just one of many tragedies instead of being the unique crime in history that it was. Worst of all, the Vilnius government is trying to minimize crimes and collaboration by Lithuanians against the Jews,” said Dr. Zuroff.

— Avi Friedman

Americans Get Poorer

As the Heavenly judgment on the financial wellbeing of the nations of the world nears, America's balance sheet isn't looking very healthy, although the good news is that the Orthodox Jewish community appears to be faring slightly better.

According to a new US Census Bureau report, some 46 million of America's 310 million citizens are living below the poverty line. That's