

Lithuanian court clears Klaipeda men of swastikas charges

VILNIUS, Jan 26, BNS – A Klaipeda court has announced having closed an investigation of administrative violations of four young men who were charged with demonstrating posters with swastikas of the Nazi Germany during the parade of Lithuania's Restoration of Independence Day and other occasions.

The court dropped the charges after establishing no violation or elements of crime in the actions of the four men, saying the symbols on the photographs could not be considered Nazi swastikas, although had a visual resemblance to the Nazi symbol, the court's spokeswoman said on Thursday.

Protocols against three of the suspects were filed on Feb. 16 2010 after they were noticed among participants of a parade carrying posters with what the police believed were swastikas.

After the hearings were opened, one of the suspects and his friend brought similar posters to a court room on May 5 2010. They ignored police instructions to remove the posters.

According to lytas.lt news portal, the court found that the photographs pictured 18th-century ring elements discovered in Kernave. The photographs also portray a part of a sculpture build in Rokiskis in 1926 to mark a decade of restoration of independence.

The Klaipeda men said their aim was to familiarize Lithuanians with the country's history. Milvydas Juskauskas, a witness in the case, said deep-rooted stereotypes had to be changed, adding that swastikas should not be identified with the Nazi Germany but, instead, with the national heritage of Lithuania.

The young men were first vindicated in May of 2010, however, Lithuania's Supreme Administrative Court returned it to Klaipeda court.