

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz
Rabbi of the Western Wall
and Holy sites in Israel



הרב שמואל רבינוביץ
רב הכותל המערבי
והמקומות הקדושים

Bs"ד
16 Shvat, 5778
February 1, 2018

President Dalia Grybauskaitė
President of the Republic of Lithuania

Re: The ancient Jewish cemetery in Vilna

Dear President Grybauskaitė,

I was extremely upset to hear the recent rumor that the Government of Lithuania intends to renew the use of the destroyed structure in the ancient Jewish cemetery in Vilnius(vilna) and use it as a convention center. Its foundations are the burial site of our rabbis, our righteous and holy leaders, who serve as sources of inspiration and guides for us to this very day.

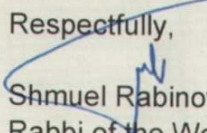
Shnipisek-(Piramont) cemetery in Vilnius contains the remains of tens of thousands of holy Jews, residents of the city of Vilna for generations.

This act desecrates the honor of the dead and the glorious history of the Jewish people in the city of Vilna. The city was so important to our nation that it was termed "Jerusalem D'Lita" as it was a metropolis of sages and writers, the greatest of the worlds wise men who with the fire of their spirit and their leadership illuminated the entire diaspora of Eastern Europe.

Jewish law prohibits touching and disturbing the remains of bodies, as all remains are considered sacred. The plans I have heard about would very seriously offend the entire Jewish people.

I hereby wholeheartedly request, out of respect for the Jewish nation and its values, that you do all that you can to cancel this plan to make this site a convention center. I am sure you can find a reasonable alternative.

Respectfully,


Shmuel Rabinowitz
Rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

The Western Wall
Heritage Foundation



הקרן למורשת
הכותל המערבי