

*Text of the letter delivered to the Lithuanian ambassador in London Monday morning 7 February 2011 by the Right Honourable Denis MacShane MP. The letter was drafted by Danny Ben-Moshe and evolved with input from the other signatories. Documents and news referred to can be accessed at the website [www.DefendingHistory.com](http://www.DefendingHistory.com)*

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H.E. Dr Oskaras Jusys  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania  
84 Gloucester Place  
London W1U 6AU

7 February 2011

Dear Ambassador

We the undersigned are writing to express our concern at the irony of your hosting an exhibition about pre World War II Jewish life called “The Sounds of Silence” in London, alongside an academic colloquium dedicated to Lithuanian-Jewish relations, without the participation of scholars who are critical of the Lithuanian Government and its Holocaust policy.

For some years the Lithuanian Government has been engaged in an increasingly energetic campaign to stop the full truth about the Holocaust and events of World War II from being discussed in Lithuania, while at the same time manipulating debate on these issues in the European Parliament. These developments form part of a broader campaign against the tiny Lithuanian Jewish community and against Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians alike, who do not subscribe to the “Double Genocide” model inherent in the Prague Declaration (2008) and other such documents. Debate about the Holocaust has been silenced or wrongfully manipulated by:

- ❖ The state prosecutors, since 2006, threatening Lithuanian Jewish partisans with war crimes investigations — a campaign of defamation which has the support even of the Lithuanian Human Rights Association
  
- ❖ The failure to punish a single Lithuanian Nazi war criminal since Lithuania’s independence in 1991

- ❖ Letting the Jewish partisan site at the Rudninkai Forest fall into disrepair and ruin
- ❖ A Lithuanian court ruling, in May 2010, that the swastika, which over recent years has become a more common sight in rallies, is not a Nazi symbol but forms part of the country's historic legacy, and as such can be publicly displayed
- ❖ The amendment of the Criminal Code in June 2010, making it a criminal offence to contest the Government's "double genocide" policy, which equates, and thus distorts, Soviet and Nazi crimes in Lithuania during the War
- ❖ Lithuania helping lead a European wide campaign, including the Prague Declaration of June 2008, which "recognizes Communism and Nazism as a common legacy", proclaims "substantial similarities between Nazism and Communism", and demands the "overhaul" of all European textbooks to reflect this revisionist history
- ❖ The national Genocide Museum in central Vilnius excluding reference to the Holocaust.

The undersigned also note the Lithuanian Government's failure to condemn and respond to rising anti-Semitism, which contributes to the perpetuation of this ancient hatred. This includes:

- ❖ The failure of Government officials to condemn and restrict explicit anti-Semitism in mainstream media, such as a front page of a mass circulation daily, in July 2009, which claimed that "the Jews" are plotting to expropriate money from the country, showing the elected head of the Jewish community with a photoshopped abacus superimposed.
- ❖ Statements invoking anti-Semitic language by Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis in October 2010, such as his claim that "everyone knows" who is pushing the dual citizenship bill, and — in reference to foreign Jews — adding that "they are doing this in order to reap

financial benefits by way of property restitution”. The failure to seriously investigate and locate the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts, such as the leaving of a pig’s head during Sabbath services at the Kaunas Synagogue in August 2010, and the fire at the old synagogue in Pokroy (Pakruojis) in Spring 2009.

We, the undersigned, welcome cultural events outside of Lithuania that enhance understanding of both present and past Lithuanian Jewish life, and we acknowledge that in their own right, the Sounds of Silence Exhibition, and all the related events in London, are an important reflection of history, but we regard it as duplicitous and unacceptable for the Lithuanian Government to engage in activities around the world, which ingratiate it to the Jewish community in the Diaspora and Israel, while in Lithuania the Jewish community is continually humiliated, Lithuanian Jewish history is being untruthfully rewritten, and anti-Semitism is espoused.

Embassy-sponsored events such as the Sounds of Silence Exhibition, and the academic colloquium “No Simple Stories: Jewish-Lithuanian relations between coexistence and violence”, may present the Lithuanian government in a tolerant and respectable light, but they do not deceive those, such as the signatories to this letter, who take the time to study the full spectrum of its activities both overseas and in Lithuania. We find these events consistent with the Government’s nationalistic rewriting of history, and with its efforts to limit the freedom of debate on “Double Genocide” and the Prague Declaration by excluding from these academic events Jewish scholars from Lithuania, and members of the Lithuanian Jewish community who are critical of the Government’s policies while being personally involved in “Jewish-Lithuanian relations.”

We, the undersigned, hereby call on the Lithuanian Government to take the following steps to correct the situation and help repair Jewish-Lithuanian relations:

- ❖ Publicly ending without delay pre-trial “war crimes” investigations against Jewish partisan veterans
- ❖ Recognising the role of the Lithuanian Activist Front (and the Provisional Government) and all other Lithuanian institutions involved in the mass murder of Lithuanian Jewry starting in June 1941, in many

locations *prior to* the arrival or establishment of the administration of German Nazi forces

- ❖ Restoring for posterity the remains of the one surviving Jewish anti-Nazi fort, which was used as a base by 100 escapees from the Vilna Ghetto, from which to combat the Nazis and their collaborators
- ❖ Repealing the criminal law of June 2010, which allows for the imposition of criminal penalties for supporting, denying or downgrading crimes committed either by the Soviet Union or by Nazi Germany
- ❖ Outlawing the swastika as a Nazi symbol
- ❖ Stopping the use of anti-Semitic rhetoric by Government ministers
- ❖ Refusing permission for neo-Nazis to march in the cities of Lithuania where they espouse hate speech
- ❖ Adopting laws that recognize and restrict the anti-Semitism which incites against and vilifies the Jewish community in the Lithuanian media
- ❖ Fully and accurately representing the Holocaust in the Genocide Museum in central Vilnius and in any state sponsored exhibition on Genocide
- ❖ Including representatives of the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the Green House Holocaust museum in forums sponsored by Lithuanian embassies in the diaspora.

Several of the signatories below are Litvaks — Lithuanian Jews or their descendants, who remain committed to ensuring that the memory and legacy of their ancestors, and those Jews who remain in Lithuania today, are treated with respect and with regard to the historical truth.

Yours sincerely

- ❖ Associate Professor Danny Ben-Moshe, Victoria University, Australia
- ❖ Zane Buzby, CEO, Co-Founder, The Survivor Mitzvah Project, USA
- ❖ Uri Chanoch, Board Member, Claims Conference
- ❖ Michael Freedland, broadcaster, London
- ❖ Richard M. Golden, Professor of History, Director, Jewish Studies Program University of North Texas
- ❖ Dr. Clemens Heni, Director, The Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism
- ❖ Professor Mikhail Iossel, Concordia University, Canada; founding director, Summer Literary Seminars and the Litvak Studies Institute
- ❖ Dr Saul Issroff, Litvak genealogist and author of *The Holocaust in Lithuania: A Book of Remembrance 1939-1945*, London
- ❖ Lord Janner of Braunstone, Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, chair of the Holocaust Education Trust
- ❖ Professor Dovid Katz, Editor of [www.DefendingHistory.com](http://www.DefendingHistory.com); chief analyst at the Litvak Studies Institute (Vilnius)
- ❖ Professor Dov Levin, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, author of many works on Lithuanian Jewry and the Holocaust, including *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities from their Foundation until after the Holocaust: Lithuania* (Jerusalem 1996)
- ❖ Rt Hon Dr Denis MacShane MP, former Europe Minister UK
- ❖ Dr Daniela Mantovan, Yiddish Studies, Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg
- ❖ Rabbi Barry Marcus, Central Synagogue, London; Trustee, Holocaust Memorial Day; Patron of Yad Vashem, UK
- ❖ Joseph Melamed, Chairman, Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel
- ❖ Professor Faye Ran, Metropolitan College of New York
- ❖ Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert, Head of Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University College London
- ❖ Prof Milton Shain, Department of Historical Studies and Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Cape Town
- ❖ Dr Harold Shukman, Emeritus Fellow (former Lecturer in Modern Russian History), St Antony's College, Oxford
- ❖ Dr. Efraim Zuroff, Director, Simon Wiesenthal Center-Israel Office, and Coordinator, SWC Nazi War Crimes Research Worldwide.