

Several people's opinion does not diminish Lithuania's efforts to commemorate Holocaust, preserve Jewish heritage – ForMin

VILNIUS , Sep 21, BNS – Several people's opinion cannot diminish Lithuania's efforts to commemorate Holocaust and preserve the Jewish heritage, the spokeswoman for Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Audronius Azubalis said amid reports of protests against Azubalis' participation in a commemorative event in New York.

"Several people's opinion does not deny and diminish Lithuania's long-term and effective efforts to commemorate Holocaust, preserve the Jewish cultural heritage and effectively solve the issues of compensation for Jewish religious property," Renata Lazdin told BNS on Wednesday.

Azubalis, who is in New York to take part in the General Assembly of the United Nations, is scheduled to attend a concert organized by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. According to media reports, a number of Lithuanian Holocaust survivors and their advocates have protested the invitation of Azubalis, as "guest of honor" at the concert.

"Following the initial outcry after the invitation was announced a few weeks ago, the "guest of honor" title was stripped from the minister," the Jewish Daily Forward, an American Jewish newspaper, writes in its online version.

Lazdin said she had no information on the title stripping. In her words, the minister was scheduled to attend a dinner organized on behalf of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"In any case the minister's welcome word for the attendance will be read," Lazdin told BNS.

This is the second invitation-related incident involving Lithuanian officials. It was announced last week that Yad Vashem, the famous

Israeli Holocaust museum, rescinded invitations to Lithuanian Minister of Culture Arunas Gelunas and Ambassador Darius Degutis to an annual commemoration of Lithuanian victims of the Holocaust. The museum made the decision following reports that Lithuania's law enforcement institutions wanted to question heads of the controversial the Association of Lithuanian Jews in a case of alleged slandering of deceased people by announcing inaccurate lists of killers of Jews.

90 percent of 220,000 Jews were killed by the Nazi and their collaborators in Lithuania after the World War II.

Lithuania marks 2011 as the Year of Remembrance of Defense of Freedom and Great Losses and the Victims of the Holocaust in Lithuania.