

**WIESENTHAL CENTER URGES YIVO TO FOLLOW EXAMPLE OF YAD
VASHEM AND DISINVITE LITHUANIAN CONSUL-GENERAL
SCHEDULED TO PARTICIPATE IN VILNA GHETTO MEMORIAL
ASSEMBLY SCHEDULED FOR THIS THURSDAY**

Jerusalem—The Simon Wiesenthal Center today called upon YIVO to rescind the invitation it had extended to Lithuanian consul-general Valdemaras Sarapinas to participate in this Thursday night's special event to commemorate the martyrs of the Vilna Ghetto. In a statement issued here today by its chief Nazi-hunter, Israel director Dr. Efraim Zuroff, the Center noted last week's decision by Yad Vashem to cancel the participation of the Lithuanian ambassador to Israel and a visiting minister in yesterday's ceremony to commemorate the Jews murdered in Lithuania during the Holocaust, in the wake of the recent Lithuanian initiative to prosecute for libel former anti-Nazi partisan and current Chairman of the Association of Lithuanian Jews in Israel, Yosef Melamed, for exposing the active participation in Holocaust crimes of nine men considered to be national heroes in Lithuania for their role in resistance to Soviet rule.

According to Zuroff:

“Under the current circumstances, and given the leading role played by the Lithuanian government in promoting a false equivalency between Nazi and Communist crimes, and its total failure to bring to justice unprosecuted Nazi criminals and honestly confront the extensive complicity of Lithuanians in the mass murder of local and foreign Jews in Lithuania, as well as the killing of many thousands of Jews in Belarus and Poland, the participation of a Lithuanian diplomat in Thursday's ceremony dishonors the victims it was planned to commemorate. We therefore urge YIVO to follow the example of Yad Vashem which wisely understood that at this point in time, official representatives of the current Lithuanian government cannot be welcome guests at Shoa memorial events.”

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