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News

Discussions

Professor Dovid Katz: “Nationalist Marches on February 16th Bring Shame to All of Lithuania”

by Nerijus Povilaitis

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Dovid Katz, a Jewish professor and one of the most renowned Yiddish philologists in the world who observed the nationalist march in Kaunas, thinks that this sort of event on Restoration of the State Day does shame to all of Lithuania. Professor Katz said he doesn't understand why the Lithuanian government allows nationalists to march and chant xenophobic slogans.

Professor Dovid Katz, formerly head of the Yiddish Institute at Vilnius University who now lives in Vilnius, acknowledged that came to Kaunas to observe the controversial march organized by the Union of Lithuanian Nationalist Youth. The scholar isn't hiding the fact he will publish photographs and his thoughts on the march on an internet webpage so that people around the world will learn about what happened in Kaunas on February 16th.

Katz followed alongside the march and says he thinks this event on an important state holiday brings the worst possible shame to the state and its leaders. The Jewish academic was especially upset by the nationalist slogan “Lithuania for Lithuanians” and the white armbands worn by march organizers. Katz says this is a direct reference to the symbol used to mark the Lithuanian white armbanders, fascist collaborators who exterminated Jews.

“I love Lithuania, but it is very painful to see the country’s government allowing on Restoration of the State Day a march by people who degrade this day. February 16th should unify everyone, it should be a day of joy, peace and independence,” Katz told this *Lrytas*.lt reporter as the nationalist slogan “Lithuania for Lithuanians” echoed in the background.

The professor said such marches with these kinds of chants would be inconceivable in other countries.

“Think about it, would the Irish government on a state holiday allow people to march along the main boulevard of the city and to chant ‘Ireland for the Irish’? My answer is categorical: of course they wouldn’t,” Katz said.

Katz, who has lived in Lithuania for over 12 years, said there are all kinds of people in every nation. He believes the nationalists who marched in Kaunas do not represent the Lithuanian people.

“The tragic thing is that the country’s government has created all the conditions for an especially abhorrent racism to break out. And this is happening in a country which is part of the European Union,” Katz lamented.