

WIESENTHAL CENTER CALLS UPON LITHUANIAN AUTHORITIES TO BAN NEO-NAZI MARCHES TO MARK INDEPENDENCE DAY SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW FEBRUARY 16 IN KAUNAS AND ON MARCH 11 IN VILNIUS

Vilnius—The Simon Wiesenthal Center today called upon the Lithuanian authorities to ban the neo-Nazi marches scheduled to take place tomorrow (February 16) in Kaunas and on March 11 in Vilnius to mark Lithuanian independence day. At a press conference hosted here today by the Center's chief Nazi-hunter, Israel director Dr. Efraim Zuroff, together with leading Vilnius activist Prof. Dovid Katz (www.Defendingistory.com), the two presented the case for banning the marches which since 2008, when initially held, have blatantly incited against the country's minorities, and especially against the small local Jewish community.

Zuroff presented a historical survey of the rise in anti-Semitism following Lithuania's acceptance into the European Union and NATO, which was followed by its failure to punish any of the numerous unprosecuted local Nazi war criminals tried in Lithuanian courts, and a campaign to put on trial several Jewish anti-Nazi Soviet partisans on trumped up charges of war crimes. Since 2008, the Lithuanian authorities have led the efforts to promote the canard of historical equivalency between Communist and Nazi crimes and have glorified various nationalists who actively participated in the persecution of Lithuanian Jewry during the Holocaust, all of which help explain the resurgence of fascist ideology and extremist nationalism as manifested in the marches.

According to Zuroff:

"The best way to combat the resurgence of right-wing nationalist extremism in Lithuania is to honestly confront the country's Holocaust history, which includes extensive complicity of local Nazi collaborators in the mass murder of Lithuanian Jews and Jews from, and in, other lands as well. The country's failure hereto to accurately and honestly portray the role of all sectors of Lithuanian society in Holocaust crimes, is the background and a key factor in the rise of ultranationalism in Lithuania. Instead of telling the painful truth about Lithuanian crimes, in recent years the government preferred to turn some of the criminals into heroes and downplay the uniqueness of the Holocaust."

For more information: 972-50-721-4156 www.operationlastchance.org www.wiesenthal.com