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Lithuanian Jewish community to appoint new rabbi

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The Jewish Community of Lithuania has dismissed its rabbi Chaim Burstein after the community's chairwoman accused him of spreading lies about the Šnipiškių cemetery in Vilnius.



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"The Religious Council of the Vilnius Jewish Community decided that the contract with Chaim Burstein will not be extended, and Shmuel Yatom will be appointed as acting rabbi until a new rabbi takes office," the community said.

The community's leader Faina Kukliansky told BNS that Burstein "spread entirely misleading information about the Šnipiškių cemetery".

Burstein said that planned reconstruction could harm the Jewish cemetery, accusing Kukliansky of authoritarian rule.

Meanwhile Kukliansky said the Lithuanian government's plans to reconstruct the Sports Palace, which is in part located in the territory of the former Jewish cemetery, was supported by the Jewish Community of Lithuania and the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe (CPJCE), as the renovation would be conducted inside the building only and the territory would be preserved as a memorial park.

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"The government made the right decision to renovate the building and establish a centre of conferences and cultural events there. As the building is listed as architectural heritage, no significant structural changes are allowed, with only interior renovation planned. The territory around the building will be preserved as a memorial park with signs of the prominent people buried there," said Kukliansky.

"We should be happy about the agreement we have reached, since it could serve as an example to other governments in this part of the world on how similar challenges should be solved with respect and preservation of Jewish cemeteries and sites of mass massacres of the Holocaust," she added.

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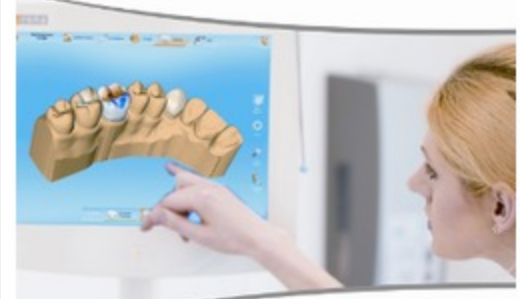
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