

## History questions we must answer with heads raised high -- Lithuania's justmin

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VILNIUS, Dec 02, BNS - Lithuania should answer questions of history with its head raised high, Lithuanian Justice Minister Remigijus Simasius on Wednesday wrote in his blog, in the entry dismissing accusations that Lithuania was antisemitic and collaborated with the Nazis.

"First of all, the fact that many Jews were killed in Lithuania doesn't in itself mean that Lithuanians are Jew killers. Quite on the contrary, Lithuania was a place where Jews were safe and lived in peace. Until the Nazis came. Had Lithuanians been antisemitic, Lithuania wouldn't have become a haven for the Jewish and Vilnius wouldn't have been known as Jerusalem of the North," the justice minister said in his blog.

According to him, Jews were neither persecuted not oppressed in Lithuania, "differently from the US, which at first didn't want to take in Jews fleeing Hitler's Germany, from the Soviet Union, which would return runaway Jews to the Nazis, or even the UK, which had its share of pseudo-archaic nonsense."

"Throwing accusations of antisemitism or collaboration at Lithuania is insulting to the memory of the hundreds of Lithuanians, who were helping Jews. (...) How can anyone accuse Lithuania of collaborating with the Nazis, if this collaboration simply never took place in any official or formal ways," Simasius said.

The justice minister also stressed that despite of Nazi efforts, the force never managed to launch its SS legion in Lithuania, differently from Latvia, Estonia and many other among its occupied states.

"I think we should answer questions of history with our heads raised high, especially when we have clear answers," Rimasius said.

The minister's said blog entry comes just days after BBC's HARDtalk show-host put under the drill Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius and suggested that Lithuania is unwilling to acknowledge its own part in killing Jews and the country doesn't lobby for attention towards Hitler's crimes as it does to those of Stalin.

Nazis and their local perpetrators annihilated more than 90 percent of Lithuania's pre-war Jewish population of 220,000 during World War II. A total of 6 million Jews perished during the Holocaust.

Lithuania's then president amid an official visit to Israel in 1995 apologized in Israel's parliament - the Kneset - to the Jewish people on behalf of the Lithuanian nation for those citizens that took part in making the holocaust happen.