

## Lithuania's Jews offended by March 11 parade on "cemetery territory"

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VILNIUS, Mar 19, BNS - The Lithuanian Jewish Community on Friday said it was offended by a parade held to mark 20 years of Lithuania's restored independence, which they claim took place in the territory of the historic Snipiskes Jewish cemetery.

According a statement released by the community, the Vilnius city administration used the 20th anniversary of the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence to "trample on and offend" the Jewish community in Lithuania.

"It is most strange that there was no location in the city of Vilnius for this parade other than the Snipiskes Jewish cemetery, especially with no permit from the Cultural Heritage Department and the Ministry of Culture," reads the statement, signed by the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the Vilnius Jewish Community chairpersons.

Lithuania's Jews said they will demand that the "territory of the historic Snipiskes Jewish cemetery is not used in the future for mass gatherings."

The Baltic Pride Parade, scheduled to take place in Vilnius in May, has spurred ample discussions as the initial location proposed for the event is also in a territory possibly pertaining to the cemetery in question.

"We invite the Vilnius Municipality administration and the mayor of Vilnius to cooperate with the Jewish community rather than complicating relations with suchlike violations of legal acts," the statement reads.

Over 500 youths of a nationalistic movement on the afternoon of March 11 marked the 20th anniversary of Lithuania's independence with a parade down Vilnius streets.

The parade, which took off from the Adomas Mickevicius monument, saw the youths march down through the Sereikiskes park towards the former Vilnius Concert and Sports Palace chanting "Lithuania", "Lithuania for Lithuanians" and singing folk songs.

The march was put on by the Lithuanian National Center, and was sanctioned courtesy of a permit requested by the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrat faction member Kazimieras Uoka, who was also present for a part of the parade. Political figure Romualdas Ozolas was among others to attend the event.

The participants upon reaching the Concert and Sports Hall sang the Lithuanian Anthem before leaving the event.

The parade lasted about 30 minutes, was overseen by police forces and went by without incident.