

Translation of: <http://www.balsas.lt/naujiena/198144> (28 May 2008)

Wiesenthal Center accuses Lithuanian judicial authorities of discrediting Jews

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Israel, that persecutes former Nazis and their collaborators, condemns Lithuanian judicial authorities which seek to interrogate a woman of Jewish ethnicity because of possible involvement in the massacre of the inhabitants of Kaniūkai village that took place during World War II. The letter that the Wiesenthal Center sent to the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs protests the investigation against a Jewish member of the anti-Nazi resistance in Lithuania, Fania Brantsovskaya.

According to the Center's announcement, Lithuanian judicial authorities are accused in the letter of "launching a campaign to discredit Jewish resistance fighters by falsely accusing them of war crimes in order to deflect attention from widespread Lithuanian participation in the mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust".

Prosecutor Rita Vaitiekūnienė, who is Deputy Head of the Division of Special Investigations in the Prosecutor General's Office, commented on this announcement to BNS [Baltic News Service] on Wednesday and said that they are searching for Brantsovskaya but her place of residence could not be found yet.

According to the prosecutor, they have taken an interest in the 86 year old Brantsovskaya after receiving a message about "a massacre of civilian population in the village of Kaniūkai, Šalčininkai district, perpetrated by the Soviet partisans" from Rytas Kupčinskas, a Conservative Party MP.

"The request was supplemented by a press publication and a scholarly research paper by Rimantas Zizas, a member of the staff of the Lithuanian Institute of History. This material contains information about some Soviet partisans, who could have taken part in the Kaniūkai massacre and who might still be alive. Vaitiekūnienė explained that Brantsovskaya is mentioned among them."

The prosecutor confirmed that after evaluating the importance of the received documents for the investigation of Crimes against Humanity, and the fact that Brantsovskaya and several other persons live in Lithuania was confirmed, this material was sent over to the district prosecutor of Šalčininkai.

The Wiesenthal Center claims that Brantsovskaya works as a librarian in Vilnius University Yiddish Institute. The institute confirmed this information to BNS.

According to the announcement of the Center, Lithuanian judicial authorities are also searching for Rachelė Margolis, but Prosecutor Vaitiekūnienė said she had no information about her.

Historians report that the village of Kaniūkai was attacked by a group of 120 to 150 Soviet partisans in January 1944. During the attack 38 villagers were killed and some more injured. In the opinion of historians, the reason for the attack might have been linked with the Kaniūkai village armed self-defense units that stood up against the violence of the red partisans.
