

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 1, 2008

The Honorable Gediminas Kirkilas
Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania
Gedimino Ave. 11
LT – 01103 Vilnius
Lithuania

Prime Minister Kirkilas:

As Members of Congress deeply committed to the strong ties between the United States and Lithuania, we are writing to express our mounting concerns regarding the disconcerting investigations into the wartime activities of Jewish partisans.

While we acknowledge and respect the right of your nation's Judiciary and law enforcement authorities to investigate any alleged crimes of the past or present, it is baffling and deeply troubling to us that investigations relating to alleged participation of Soviet partisans in crimes committed against civilians in the territory of occupied Lithuania during the Second World War, have focused disproportionately on Jewish members of the Nazi-era resistance movement, including Rachel Margolis, Fania Brantsovsky, and Yitzhak Arad. It is our understanding that the Jewish community constituted a small minority of the anti-Nazi resistance, and the exclusive focus on prominent Jewish resistance members seems inherently disproportional.

Prime Minister Kirkilas, sadly the situation is further exacerbated by the fact that international calls for prosecution of Lithuanian collaborators of Nazi-era atrocities towards Lithuanian Jews have been largely ignored, and many alleged war criminals are not the focus of investigations, nor have they been indicted.

To this date, only three Nazi collaborators have been indicted in Lithuania, all of which were cases developed in the United States. Two of these cases were dismissed due to death and severe illness, and in the only remaining case, after arriving at a guilty verdict, the Lithuanian courts refused to carry out the sentence. Continued investigations into Jewish resistance fighters under the accusation of war crimes charges serve to discredit heroic Jewish resistance fighters, and create an imbalance in the public discourse over this painful era in a manner that diverts attention from efforts to bring those individuals responsible for atrocities against Lithuanian citizens – Jewish and non-Jewish - to justice.

We are particularly concerned about Lithuanian legal authorities' repeated inquiries with Rachel Margolis, allegedly as part of an investigation into the wartime conduct of Soviet partisans. As you may be aware, Ms. Margolis recently published her memoirs recounting her experiences as a survivor of the Vilna ghetto and heroic efforts as a fighter in the Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance movement.

After the war, Ms. Margolis helped to found Vilnius' Green House, whose mission is to educate about Lithuania's history during the Holocaust. In 1998, she moved to Israel, but continued to return to Lithuania to give tours of the Green House museum during the summer, when international tourism is at its peak. Unfortunately, this summer, Ms. Margolis will not be

traveling to Lithuania, because she fears that she will be the object of harassment and intimidation, and of continued defamation by Lithuanian media.

It is our understanding that on May 5 and 13, 2008, Lithuanian police initiated a search for Ms. Margolis, as part of an investigation into alleged war crimes. This is truly an unfortunate turn of events, given that Ms. Margolis was honored by the former Prime Minister of Lithuania in 2005 for her heroism fighting in the anti-Nazi resistance. Today, Ms. Margolis' autobiographical works are unconscionably being used to build a case against her and other partisans. Disturbingly, certain Lithuanian media outlets have referred to Ms. Margolis and other prominent former anti-Nazi resistance heroes Fania Branstovsky and Yitzhak Arad as terrorists and murderers, giving rise to serious concerns about anti-Jewish sentiment in national media.

Prime Minister Kirkilas, we request your assurance that Lithuanian legal and judicial authorities will refrain from intimidating and frightening Holocaust survivors by initiating spurious investigations against heroes of Lithuania's resistance movement. These investigations along with the mounting list of complex matters relating to the Jewish community in Lithuania have caused great concern amongst the international Jewish community, and to Members of Congress. Ms. Margolis and other partisans should not have to live in fear from reprisals, media defamation or harassment from authorities. We further request your assistance in helping us understand the sudden energetic pursuit of investigations into the activities of Jewish partisans, in contrast to the failure of Lithuanian prosecutors to develop cases against Nazi collaborators since Lithuania's independence in 1991.

We look forward to your timely response to our letter. Please know we stand ready to work with you and your government on this issue along with others of mutual concern to the United States and Lithuania, including Lithuania's participation in the visa waiver program, energy security, NATO expansion and other bilateral matters.

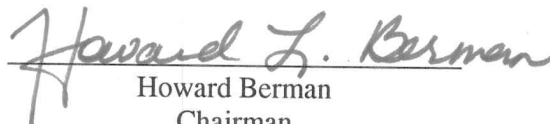
Sincerely,



Paul Hodes
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Europe



Howard Berman
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Cc:
President Valdas Adamkus
Minister of Foreign Affairs Petras Vaitiekunas
Seimas Chairman Viktoras Muntianas
Deputy Seimas Chairman Andrius Kubilius