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# NEWSLETTER



The International Commission  
for the Evaluation of the Crimes of  
the Nazi and Soviet Occupation  
Regimes in Lithuania

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## A Group of Lithuanian Educators Attended an International Seminar in Israel

12–22 July a group of 26 Lithuanian educators and education workers attended a seminar-traineeship at the International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, Israel. One of the historians at the International Commission Dr. Alfredas Rukshenas also joined the group of trainees and worked at Yad Vashem archives, where he searched for the information about the Holocaust in Lithuania.

The seminar participants were introduced with the Jewish history from Ancient times until Contemporary period, the participants had a unique possibility to perceive Jewish culture and traditions. The majority of lectures and methodological activities included the topic of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The Israeli lecturers conveyed the knowledge and information, which might be used during the lessons and in different projects by Lithuanian educators. Lithuanian seminar attendees visited Yad Vashem museums and memorial sites such as Warsaw Ghetto Square, Valley of the Communities, Children's Memorial and the room of reflection for contemplation and discussions. The seminar participants also met with Litvak, the Holocaust survivor Dr. Yitzhak Arad who was the first director of Yad Vashem.

The staff of the International School for Holocaust Studies gave an opportunity to Lithuanian educators to learn more about the history of Jewish state and its traditions. During the visit to the museum of Theodor Herzl, who was one of the fathers of modern Zionism, the educators saw a wonderful example of modern technology usage for educational purposes.

At the end of the seminar at the International School for Holocaust Studies, Lithuanian educators had a meeting with two representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the State of Israel: Minister Counsellor Ramunas Davidonis and Cultural Attaché Saulius Pilinkus.

During the meeting, in a warm and friendly atmosphere, the importance of education and in particular the Holocaust education, Lithuanian and Israeli relations, and the significance of historical memory preservation were discussed.

The teachers were invited to participate in the international seminar by the Secretariat of the International Commission which has a cooperation agreement with the International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem since 2002.







## Festive Gathering of Freedom Loving People in Vilnius, Washington Square

23 July in Vilnius, Washington Square was held the event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Welles Declaration. In the Welles Declaration, a document of crucial importance to Lithuania, the United States stated that it did not recognize the annexation of the Baltic States, launching a five decade non-recognition policy of the occupation of the Baltic States. The declaration gained the name of Welles as it was issued by the Under Secretary of State Benjamin Sumner Welles. The event was attended by politicians and leaders: The President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė and other honourable guests. The Head of the International Commission and the initiator of this commemoration Emanuelis Zingeris in his speech emphasised the importance of history understanding and its evaluation, and modern life issues and threats. Friendly atmosphere of the event was heightened by the abundance of Lithuanian – USA flags in the hands of young people. The words about freedom loving people, who on the 23 July gathered in Vilnius, Washington Square to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Welles Declaration, and the importance of friendship and partnership not only in human life or the activities of institution but also for the state, become a keynote message of the event.





## Visit to Varena "Azuolas" Gymnasium Tolerance Education Centre

27 July the Head of Sub commission of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania Saulius Suziedėlis and the Coordinator of Educational Programmes of the International Commission Ingrida Vilkiene visited Varena.



The visitors had an aim to pay a call to Varena "Azuolas" Gymnasium Tolerance Education Centre (hereafter TEC) and gain insight into the activities implemented by the TEC. School principle together with the vice-principal and TEC coordinator not only introduced the activities, but also acted as the Varena tour guides. The visitors also met Varena major Algis Kaseta, who understands the importance of historical memory preservation.



## TEC teachers visit Icchokas Meras' birthplace

On the last Friday of July a group of teachers from TECs visited Kelme – the hometown of famous Litvak writer Icchokas Meras, who loved Lithuania and wrote in Lithuanian.

The teachers wanted to visit a square named after Icchokas Meras and to recall the writer's, who passed away in 2014, life and creation. The teachers were impressed by the square – chess board, reminding one of the most famous writer's creations "A Stalemate Lasts but a Moment". In the memorial square the teachers recalled the tragic events of the writers' life. In 1941 his parents were shot down, he managed to escape, was hidden and adopted by Lithuanian peasant family from Kelme district. On their way back the teacher thought of reading the book "A Stalemate Lasts but a Moment" one more time, as if a short meeting with the square named after writer became an obligation to reminiscence the plot of the creation.



## "That Who Bears Historical Memory, Is Bearing the Future"



1 August the 25 th annual gathering of Lithuanian exiles, political prisoners and freedom fighters "With Lithuania in Our Hearts" took place in Ariogala, in the valley of the Dubysa.

This year a group of TEC teachers from Alytus, Birzai, Balbieriskis, Kedainiai, Kalvarija, and Vilnius attended the event. They joined the procession to the valley of the Dubysa. The people of different generations shared the same elevated mood and joyful atmosphere.

The President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė in her speech expressed her gratitude to all the exiles, political prisoners and freedom fighters, and reminded the present topicality: "The historical challenges repeat themselves but in different shapes and at different time."

The gathering in Ariogala lasted till the evening. The people were singing, dancing and communicating. This wonderful gathering already has a 25-year tradition. The teachers discussed that such a nice tradition should be cherished and that way both the historical memory and the future will be borne.



### Israeli Ambassador in Lithuania visited Kupiskis and Povilas Matulionis Gymnasium

3 August Israeli Ambassador in Lithuania Amir Maimon visited Kupiskis. The ambassador was interested in former Jewish community life before WWII, its destiny and memory monumentalization. Into the visit programme the meeting with Kupiskis Povilas Matulionis Gymnasium community was included. Nijole Puzelienė, the teacher who just returned from the traineeship in the International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, also attended the meeting.

The ambassador was delighted by the fact that Jewish memorial places: cemetery, synagogue Smidt's mill are well preserved and expressed his gratitude to school community for their interest in his nation's traditions and destiny, and reminded that it's impossible to build future without knowing the past.



### Israeli Ambassador in Lithuania visit to Panevezys and the acquaintance with the TECs of this region

5 August Israeli Ambassador in Lithuania Amir Maimon visited Panevezys and met some politicians, businessmen, city community members and Panevezys Jewish Community. At Panevezys Jewish community the ambassador was introduced to the Headmaster of Margarita Rimkevicaite Technological School in Panevezys Tautvydas Anilionis, Panevezys "Rozynas" Progymnasium TEC coordinator Genute Zilyte and "Ausros" Secondary School Birzai TEC coordinator Vidmantas Jukonis. These tolerance centres have close cooperation connections with Panevezys Jewish Community.

