



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE CRIMES OF THE NAZI AND SOVIET OCCUPATION REGIMES IN LITHUANIA

To Her Excellency the President of the Republic of Lithuania
Dalia Grybauskaitė

2019-04-08

To The Most Honorable Prime Minister of Lithuania
Saulius Skvernelis

PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE PLANS OF THE LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT TO ASSUME THE FUNCTIONS OF AND LIQUIDATE THE INDEPENDENT SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE CRIMES OF THE NAZI AND SOVIET OCCUPATION REGIMES IN LITHUANIA

We address you about the disturbing and worrying plans of the Lithuanian Government to abolish the Secretariat of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania and to transfer the functions of the said Secretariat to the Chancellery of the Lithuanian Government.

The international community sees the work of the Commission and its Secretariat as an important factor in the process of democratization and the willingness of the Republic of Lithuania to come to terms with its history, especially of the Holocaust and Soviet occupation. From its inception the Commission has helped to research and to present internationally Lithuania's historical experience. The Commission's work is important in raising awareness of, and respect for, the victims of the Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes, the development of democratic norms, and a culture of dialogue and understanding.

The essential precondition for the Commission members to participate in the work of the Commission was, and still is, independence and freedom from any interference in the Commission's academic work from the Government or other political bodies, regardless of the reasons. Since the establishment of the Commission, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has respected this principal and it was one of the major reasons for the success of the Commission and international recognition of its work. This principal of independence and non-interference was applied both to the Commission and its Secretariat.

The Commission is based on the voluntary contribution of its members who are internationally respected experts in their fields. The Commission's work could not be performed without the administration, that is, the Secretariat. Despite the fact that the level of financing of the Commission's activities is clearly inadequate for a member state of the European Union, the Secretariat managed to fulfill its main functions. We in the Commission very much appreciate the work of the Secretariat in organizing academic research and initiatives in the field of education. In

this regard it is important to mention the establishment and efficient coordination of the network of Tolerance Education Centers (a positive example of such outreach), the annual teacher-training seminars with Yad Vashem, the academic conferences, and the numerous other public activities which commemorate the victims of totalitarian regimes, build support for democracy, and encourage openness and tolerance.

Taking into consideration the information outlined above, the intention of the Government to liquidate the Secretariat of the Commission and transfer its functions to the Government itself without any consultations with the Commission is extremely worrying to its leadership and members. The international community will see this as turning back from the Commission's principle of independence and unfettered research, as direct interference by the Government, and as the politicization of history. This will end the work of the Commission and this fact will be used to question all of its previous work and achievements. We fear that this will have a very negative impact on the image of Lithuania.

Previously, the concerns over the ill-advised actions of the Government have been expressed in an official letter of the Chairman of the Commission, Emanuelis Zingeris, the Chairman of the Sub-commission for Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi Occupation Regime and the Holocaust, Prof. Saulius Sužiedelis, and the Chairman of the Sub-commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Soviet Occupation Regime, Dr. Arvydas Anušauskas. The Government did not even deign to answer these concerns. We should draw attention to the fact that plans to abolish the Secretariat are negatively evaluated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, many educators, members of civil society, as well as the directors of Lithuanian schools.

If the Lithuanian Government proceeds in its plans to liquidate the Secretariat, the Commission does not see how it can function in accordance with the mandate outlined in the President's decree of 16 October 2012. We regret that we have to consider resignation but believe we must act in defense of our reputation, freedom of expression, and the principles of academic independence.

THEREFORE, WE STATE:

THE COMMISSION IN CORPORE RESIGNS IF THE LITHUANIAN GOVERNMENT TAKES THE DECISION TO ABOLISH THE SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMISSION AND TRANSFERS ITS FUNCTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CHANCELLERY

Emanuelis Zingeris, Chairman of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania

Prof. Saulius Sužiedelis, Chairman of the Sub-commission for Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi Occupation Regime and the Holocaust

Dr. Arvydas Anušauskas, Chairman of the Sub-commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Soviet Occupation Regime

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

Rabbi Andrew Baker, Director of International Jewish Affairs, American Jewish Committee, Washington, DC, USA

Dr. Jonathan Brent, Executive Director/CEO, The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, USA

Dr. Arūnas Bubnys, LGGRTC, Lithuania
Aleksandr Daniel, International Public Organization Memorial, Russia
Dr. Christoph Dieckmann, University of Bern, Switzerland
Dr. Algirdas Jakubčionis, Vilnius University, Lithuania
Nicholas Lane, American Jewish Committee USA
Prof. Dr. Šarūnas Liekis, Vyatutas Magnus University, Lithuania
Dr. Jürgen Matthäus, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies,
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USA
Prof. Norman M. Naimark, Stanford University, USA
Dr. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, The Lithuanian Institute of History, Lithuania
Prof. emeritus Dr. Antony Polonsky, Brandeis university, USA
Prof. emeritus Dr. Dina Porat, Tel Aviv University, Israel
Dr. Janos M. Rainer, Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Hungary
Prof. Dr. Timothy Snyder, Yale University, USA
Prof. Dr. Joachim Tauber, Director of the North-East-Institute at the University of Hamburg,
Germany
Dr. Arkadi Zeltser, Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Israel