



In 2021, we will mark the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Unlike most of Europe, Holocaust victims in Lithuania were murdered near their places of residence. In a few months of summer and fall 1941, Lithuanian Jewish communities were completely destroyed by Nazis and their local collaborators.

To remember these painful historical events, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, together with the Tolerance Education Centers established on its initiative and with other partners, initiates the national project **“The Road of Memory 1941 – 2021”**, which will take place from June to December this year. Similar events take place at the initiative of the International Commission for more than a decade to commemorate the National Holocaust Remembrance Day – 23 September.

This year, the “The Road of Memory 1941-2021” events are organized chronologically, following the calendar of painful historical events. A series of commemoration events are planned to mark the 80th anniversary of the destruction of Jewish communities in individual towns and cities. There are over 200 mass murder sites of Holocaust victims in Lithuania. It would be very symbolic this year to visit all or at least most of these places and pay tribute to innocent victims.

The participants of “The Road of Memory 1941-2021” will gather in the central parts of cities and towns (where Jews used to live) and then march to mass murder sites, retracing the path of the victims killed during the Holocaust. We encourage the participants to bring pebbles with the names of the Jews who lived here inscribed on them. It has two meanings: respect for the historical Jewish tradition of carrying pebbles to cemeteries and the personalization of Holocaust victims. In the commemorations at the sites of the massacre these names will be uttered and the stories of individual families and the most prominent personalities of the land will be resurrected from absence. We hope that this initiative will accelerate the appearance of monuments with immortalized names of victims in the places of massacres throughout Lithuania.

We are grateful that International March of the Living and European March of the Living have already agreed to be partners of “The Road of Memory 1941-2021” and plan to participate in these events. Since 2019, these organizations have been participants and partners of The Road of Memory in Lithuania. In year 2019, fourteen foreign delegations took part in The Road of Memory.

We hope that the organization of these meaningful and sensitive commemorations will help to achieve a natural universal understanding that the Holocaust was a great tragedy not only for Jews

but also for all Lithuania. During these tragic events we have lost our phenomenal intellectual, cultural, political and economic potential.

The first commemoration event of "The Road of Memory 1941-2021" will take place on June 23 in Gargždai. Here, on June 24, 1941, 200 men were shot dead by German Gestapo, SD and police officers. Almost all of those shot were Jewish. These massacres were the first mass murder of Jews in Lithuania. According to some historians, this was, in general, the first massacre of its kind since the war between Germany and the Soviet Union began. It can be said that the genocide of Lithuanian Jews (Holocaust) began precisely in Gargždai.

Information about other "The Road of Memory 1941-2021" commemoration events you can find on the www.komisija.lt