



NEWSLETTER

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LITHUANIAN REPRESENTATIVES AT THE INTERNATIONAL MARCH OF THE LIVING IN POLAND

On 28 April 2022, the International March of the Living took place in Poland, at the former Nazi-run Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, the largest site of human annihilation.

A group of fifty people from Lithuania took part in this event, along with representatives from 25 countries. Around 2 500 people, Jewish and non-Jewish, took part in this event. The participants from different countries, of different ages, walked together for about 3.5 km (from the Auschwitz Museum to Auschwitz-Birkenau) to remember the victims of the Holocaust, the pain and loss they experienced, and to feel a sense of unity that only together can we stand against evil, anti-Semitism and incitement to hatred. Upon arriving at the site of the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, a tribute ceremony was held at the main memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.



The commemoration began with a greeting in 25 languages, including the Lithuanian greeting „sveiki“. The President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, spoke about what happened at the site during the Second World War and about the Jews, Poles and other nationalities killed. Referring to the mass killings, the Holocaust, the President of Poland pointed out that there was a war going on in the Ukraine, which showed that people did not learn from history, and that it was the war that showed how cruel and horrible human beings could be.

Edward Mosberg, a former prisoner of Auschwitz, told his personal, horrific story of his family's loss and survival. During the event, 6 torches were lit to symbolize the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust. One of these torches was lit by a student from Lithuania, together with youth representatives from Austria, Israel, Poland and Germany.



The Lithuanian representatives were invited to this event by the Secretariat of the International Commission in cooperation with the European March of the Living, EMOTL. The following participants from Lithuania took part in the event: Arūnas Bubnys, a member of the International Commission, a historian, Director of the LAGGRTC; Sania Kerbelis, Chairman of the Jewish Community of Šiauliai County, together with the members of the community; representatives of the schools with Tolerance Education Centres: Representatives of Alytus Sakalėlis Primary School, Alytus Jotvingiai, Putinai and Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas Gymnasiums, Ariogala Gymnasium, Kalvarija Gymnasium, Kaunas Art Gymnasium, and Mažeikiai Merkelis Račkauskas Gymnasium and Gabija Gymnasium, as well as the Coordinator of the International Commission's Education Programmes, Ingrida Vilkienė, with a Public Relations specialist, Liveta Šikarskaite.





Some of the participants from Lithuania shared their thoughts about taking part in the March of the Living:

I am a descendant of Jewish Holocaust survivors. When I think about the fact that my grandfather and grandmother may never have returned from the concentration camp, I am always grateful that I was born. I met an elderly man just like my grandfather - bright-eyed, fair-faced, with deep wisdom - when I took part in the March of the Living to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. I will treasure this encounter for good in my heart.

Rašella Galinienė, Member of the Jewish Community of Šiauliai County

After the event, some of the Lithuanian representatives had a meeting with Nabuki Sugihara, the son of the Righteous Among the Nations, the Consul of Japan in Lithuania, Chiyune Sugihara. According to Michel Gourary, one of the leaders of EMOTL, such an event is not only a participation in the March of the Living, but also an opportunity to meet Holocaust survivors or their relatives, to authentically touch the tragic history of humanity.



Thousands of people from all over the world gathered to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. It is an honour and a responsibility to be one of them. The procession from Auschwitz to Birkenau. The unity and solidarity of the people. Placing posters with their thoughts on the railway tracks leading to Birkenau concentration camp. Speech by the President of Poland, A. Duda. Music that moves the depths of the soul. Lighting of torches. A speech by Auschwitz survivor Edward Mosberg. A prayer... Perception of the tragedy of the Holocaust. It was an event where words cannot describe the feelings it evoked. You have to see it for yourself and experience those feelings. I am pleased that so many young people took part in the March of the Living, it gives hope that tragedies of this kind will never happen again.

Silva Paulauskienė, History Teacher at Mažeikiai Merkelis Račkauskas Gymnasium and Coordinator of the Tolerance Education Centre

At the event, I had to walk three kilometres from Auschwitz to Birkenau in a crowd of people from all over the world. It was an eye-opening experience that I think it made everyone realise that they must never let it happen again, and this experience will remain in the memory for a long time.

Evelina Donielaitė, III G class student of Darbėnai Gymnasium, Kretinga district



It is a great honour to take part in the March of the Living, but at the same time it is also very difficult because when you walk along that route you imagine what our compatriots went through, the hell they had to endure. And when we saw a 97-year-old man at the event, who had lived through all that horror, it was an indescribable emotion, and many of the members of our delegation burst into tears...

Sania Kerbelis, Chairman of the Jewish Community of Šiauliai County



We marched together in a sea of people in blue at the March of the Living. When you recall the historical facts, you start to think and you shudder, what would be the picture we would see if we were to see here the 6 million people whose fates were destined? This burden travels with you in the procession, but later, when we stop to listen to the speakers, we find hope - the worst is in the past, and it is our responsibility to remember and to prevent such a tragedy from happening again.

Erika Griškaitytė, a Student at Vytautas Magnus University



The International March of the Living has been taking place in the former concentration camp since 1988. A group of Lithuanian representatives participated in the March of the Living for the first time in 2019. For the last 2 years the event was not organized due to the COVID pandemic.

The March of the Living commemorates the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising that started in 1943. The day is observed in Israel and in other states with Jewish communities. It is known as Yom HaShoah, the Day of the Victims of the Holocaust and the Day of Heroic Resistance to Nazism, in memory of the heroic stand of the people imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto against the Nazis.



More information:
www.komisija.lt

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