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1/2

## Lithuanian plans to declare it bears no responsibility for the Holocaust branded an 'outrage'

Politician argues Nazi and Soviet occupations meant wartime leaders and residents were not in control of their country



Lithuanian politician Arūnas Gumulauškas, who is preparing the legislation (Photo: Facebook)

A body of European rabbis has criticised plans in the Lithuanian parliament to declare neither the country nor its leaders participated in the Holocaust.

The draft legislation, which was first reported in local media last month, is based on the view that the Lithuanian state was occupied between 1940 and 1990 by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and was therefore not in control of its actions.





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2/2

“I want to say that we cannot have the same attitude as in Western Europe to the Holocaust,” politician Arūnas Gumuliauskas, who is preparing the law, was quoted by local website 15min.lt as saying last month in the country’s parliament, the Seimas.

He said: “Why? Because, unlike the West, we went through two occupations — Soviet and Nazi. This means that we have a completely unique history and a unique interpretation.

“Therefore, artificially, say, the methodology of Western historiography is not immediately passed on to us in this way.”

But Pinchas Goldschmit, the president of the Conference of European Rabbis, said it was a “direct affront to hundreds of thousands of Lithuanian Jews whose murders were aided and abetted by Lithuanian political and military leaders, as well as local Lithuanian populations.”

He said: “The Lithuanian Government must face up to its history, not seek to ignore or deny it.

“The facts are clear: under Nazi occupation, the Provisional Lithuanian Government, Lithuanian paramilitary battalions and local Lithuanian populations were complicit in the slaughter of more than 90 per cent of approximately 220,000 Jews living in Lithuania.”

Efraim Zuroff, from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, said the proposals were an “outrage”.

He told JTA it was the “final stage of a long attempt to whitewash massive complicity by Lithuanians” and added he hoped “common sense will prevail and the legislation is dropped.”

Wartime responsibility became a contentious issue in nearby Poland in 2018, when the country’s parliament agreed a law creating an imprisonable offence of describing Nazi death camps as “Polish”.

An outcry from Israel and Jewish groups led to the law being amended.

<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/lithuanian-plans-to-declare-it-bears-no-responsibility-for-the-holocaust-branded-an-outrage-1.495111>

