



## CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

455 NORTH REXFORD DRIVE ▪ BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90210

Robert Wunderlich, Mayor

October 29, 2021

Honorable Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė,  
The Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania  
Gedimino pr. 11  
LT-01103 Vilnius  
Lithuania

Re: 2015 SEIMAS RESOLUTION NO. 597

Honorable Prime Minister,

We write to express our opposition to the 2015 Seimas Resolution No. 597, authorizing the development of the Vilnius Congress Center on the 500-year old Snipiskes Jewish cemetery.

We are cognizant of the strong relationship which our countries enjoy and our mutual commitment to tackle the challenges of the future together. We hope and anticipate that it will continue for many years. In that respect, relationships are based on shared values. It is this common ground that is so fundamental to our partnership. Accordingly, we know that you will appreciate our concern that the Seimas Resolution violates basic Freedom of Religion dictates and the preservation of cultural considerations. We also understand that the respective 2015 Seimas Resolution undermines an international agreement and several human rights provisions, including that of the Lithuanian constitution. These mechanisms in the law are causes for which both our countries have championed. International agreements are important. They provide for peace, stability and the reciprocity that comes with them.

The Snipiskes Jewish cemetery (inclusive of the Sports Palace building) is an important heritage site for Lithuanian Jewry and their descendants. It was the burial place of the Vilna Gaon and that of thousands of Torah luminaries, a holy site on which over 50,000 graves lie. The buried were leading lights of the Jewish world. Further, ninety-five percent of these Jewish communities in

Lithuania were decimated at the beginning of World War II, and we believe that this atrocity deserves recognition.

We were therefore appalled that the City Council of Vilnius passed a resolution on August 25, 2021, on the Mayor's initiative, urging Lithuanian authorities to advance the conference center development and desecration of the cemetery.

At a time when we need to strengthen our relationship and the values which we both cherish, we urge you Honorable Prime Minister to repeal the respective 2015 Resolution and return jurisdiction of the Jewish cemetery in to the hands of the descendants of those families buried in the cemetery. It is proper that the International Jewish Community be permitted to restore the cemetery back to its former glory, in accordance with the Jewish tradition.

Accordingly, we urge you Honorable Prime Minister, to do what we understand epitomizes the Lithuanian constitution and that of our bilateral efforts to protect justice, historical preservation, basic decency and the dignity of the dead. We are confident that you will do what is necessary to preserve our mutual interest.

Sincerely,



Robert Wunderlich

Mayor, City of Beverly Hills