



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Lithuania

International Religious Freedom Report 2006

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The constitution establishes the right to freedom of religion except where religious observance would violate the constitution or national law, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There is no state religion. Some religious groups enjoyed government benefits not available to others. Nontraditional religious groups faced some restrictions.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religious groups in society contributed to religious freedom, although members of religious minorities occasionally were subject to acts of intolerance. The media reported instances of anti-Semitic acts, statements, and events. Select media outlets published expressions of intolerance towards religious or ethnic groups. The political leadership of the country publicly criticized anti-Semitic statements when they occurred.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights and tolerance and in discussions on the country's strategy for addressing its Holocaust legacy. The U.S. government sponsored events to promote religious freedom, understanding, and tolerance in the country, including a September 11 commemoration that was the first interfaith service held in the country. The U.S. government promoted religious freedom and tolerance in several media events throughout the reporting period and actively denounced the few acts of religious and ethnic intolerance.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 25,174 square miles and a population of approximately 3.4 million. Roman Catholicism, the dominant faith in the country prior to the Soviet era, survived years of occupation and remained both dominant and influential. According to the 2001 census, approximately 79 percent (2,686,000) of the inhabitants considered themselves to be Roman Catholics. In May 2006, there were 683 registered Roman Catholic communities and associations (parishes, schools, monasteries, etc). Approximately 140,000 constituted the Eastern Orthodox Church, the country's second largest religious group, with 52 communities mainly along the border with Belarus. Old Believers, numbering 27,000, had 61 registered religious communities. An estimated 20,000 Lutherans belonged to 58 communities, primarily in the southwest. The Evangelical Reformed community had approximately 7,000 members in seventeen communities. The seven Sunni Muslim communities counted approximately 2,700 members, while the Greek Catholic community had approximately 300 members. The Jewish community numbered approximately 4,000. The majority of local Jews were secular, and only about 1,200 belonged to one of the seven religious communities. The Chabad Lubavich, a Hassidic Jewish group, operated a school (kindergarten through twelfth grade), a social center, and a kosher kitchen in the capital of Vilnius.

The Karaites have been in the country since 1397. Karaites, while not unique to the country, exist in few other locations in the world. Karaites speak a Turkic-based language and use the Hebrew alphabet. Some consider Karaites to be a branch of Judaism; the religion is based exclusively on the Old Testament. The Government recognizes the Karaites as a distinct ethnic group. Two houses of worship, one in Vilnius and one in nearby Trakai, serve the Karaite religious community of approximately 250 members. The Karaites' only religious leader is also their community president.

Approximately 0.23 percent of the population belonged to what the Government refers to as "nontraditional" religious communities. The most numerous are the Full Gospel Word of Faith Movement, Pentecostals/Charismatics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and the New Apostolic Church. A total of 1,055 traditional and 173 nontraditional religious associations, centers, and communities have officially registered with the State Register of Legal Entities.

Foreign missionary groups, including Baptists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses, were active in the country.

An estimated 9.4 percent of the population did not identify with any religious denomination. According to 1998 research data, approximately one-third of the country's Roman Catholics attended church services at least once a month. Data on religious participation for members of other faiths were not available.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Article 26 of the constitution provides for the right to religious freedom, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The constitution provides that a person's freedom to profess and propagate his or her religion or faith "may be subject only to those limitations prescribed by law and only when such restrictions are necessary to protect the safety of society, public order, a person's health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."

The Criminal Code contains three provisions to protect religious freedom. The code prohibits discrimination based on religion and provides for punishment of up to two years' imprisonment. Interference with religious ceremonies is also punishable with imprisonment or community service. Inciting religious hatred is punishable by imprisonment of up to three years and legal entities can be prosecuted for violations under this article.

It is unlawful to make use of the religious teachings of churches and other religious organizations, their religious activities, and their houses of prayer for purposes that contradict the constitution or the law. The Government may also temporarily restrict freedom of expression of religious conviction during a period of martial law or a state of emergency. The Government has never had occasion to invoke these laws.

There is no state religion; however, under the 1995 Law on Religious Communities and Associations, some religious groups enjoy government benefits not available to others, including government funding, the right to teach religion in public schools, and the right to register marriages. The Law on Religious Communities and Associations enables all registered religious groups to own property for prayer houses, homes, and other buildings, and permits construction of facilities necessary for their activities.

The constitution recognizes traditional churches and religious organizations, as well as other churches and religious organizations, provided that they have a basis in society and their teaching and rituals do not contravene morality or the law. In practice, there are four classifications of religious entities: traditional, state-recognized, registered, and unregistered religious communities and associations.

Government authorities acknowledge as traditional only those religions that can trace their presence in the country back at least 300 years. The law specifies nine traditional religious communities: Latin Rite Catholics, Greek Rite Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, Evangelical Reformed Church, Orthodox Christians (Moscow Patriarchate), Old Believers, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and Karaites.

Traditional religious communities and associations may register marriages; may establish subsidiary institutions; are eligible to receive government assistance; may establish joint private/public schools; and have the right to provide religious instruction in the public schools. Their highest religious leaders are eligible to apply for diplomatic passports, their clergy and theological students are exempt from military service, and they may provide military chaplains. The Ministry of Justice does not require traditional religious communities and associations to register their bylaws. Traditional religious communities do not have to pay social and health insurance for clergy and other employees, and they are not subject to a value-added tax (VAT) on basic utilities, such as electricity, telephone, and heating.

The law stipulates that the Government may grant state recognition to nontraditional religious communities that have societal support and have been registered in the country for at least twenty-five years. Nontraditional religious communities must apply to the Ministry of Justice and provide a description of their religious teachings and a founding statement signed by no fewer than fifteen members who are adult citizens of the country. The ministry must review the documents within six months and make a recommendation to Parliament for final approval.

The Baptists were the only state-recognized religion. The Baptists do not receive annual subsidies, tax exemptions, or exemptions from military service enjoyed by traditional communities. In practice, state-recognized religions receive some additional privileges from the Government, but not to the extent that traditional religious groups do. They are entitled to perform marriages and do not have to pay social security and healthcare taxes for clergy and other employees.

The Ministry of Justice's Religious Affairs Department is responsible for processing initial registration applications, but since January 2004 the new State Register of Legal Entities, under the national Registry Center, manages the database of registered religious communities. Religious communities, formerly able to register only in the capital, can now file applications at local registration centers throughout the country. Registration centers forward new applications to the Religious Affairs Department and process renewal registrations locally. New communities affiliated with traditional religions register for free, while nontraditional communities pay a registration fee of \$32 (105 litas).

Religious communities must register to obtain official status, which is a requisite for opening a bank account, owning property, or acting in a legal or official capacity as a community.

Unregistered communities have no legal status or state privileges. However, there were no reports that the Government prevented any such groups from worshiping or seeking members.

While only traditional religious communities receive annual state subsidies, nontraditional groups are eligible for government support for their cultural and social projects.

Following the restoration of the country's independence, the Government returned property to religious communities that the Nazi and Soviet occupations had confiscated. The law granted all religious communities equal opportunity to reacquire control of property they once used for religious services. The Roman Catholic community has been more successful in regaining its property than many other religious communities. The Government returned some religious properties, including twenty-eight synagogues to the Jewish community, mostly between 1991 and 1996. The Government successfully resolved a number of claims for restitution; others were pending at the end of the reporting period.

No single government agency addresses the concerns of religious groups. A small department in the Ministry of Justice adjudicates requests of religious groups for registration. The prime minister's advisor for Cultural and Jewish Affairs follows relevant issues within the Jewish community.

Since January 2005, the Office of the Equal Opportunities (OEO) ombudsperson has had the authority to adjudicate complaints about state institutions, educational institutions, places of employment, and products and service sellers and producers that discriminate on a basis of religion (previously, the office heard complaints on sex-discrimination issues only). The OEO ombudsperson has the authority to investigate complaints, recommend changes to parliamentary committees and ministries regarding legal acts, and recommend cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for pretrial investigation if warranted. The OEO ombudsperson reported no complaints of religious discrimination.

The parliament ombudsperson examines whether state authorities perform their duty to properly serve the people. The law on the parliament ombudsperson specifically notes religious beliefs in defining the functions of the office. The ombudsperson has the authority to investigate complaints, recommend changes to parliamentary committees and ministries regarding legal acts, and recommend cases to the Prosecutor General's Office for pretrial investigation if warranted. The parliament ombudsperson reported no complaints on grounds of religious beliefs during the reporting period. While there is some overlap between the two bodies, the OEO ombudsperson appears to have greater authority to hear complaints of individual acts of religious discrimination.

The Journalist Ethics Inspectorate has the authority to investigate complaints under Article 20 of the Law on Provision of Information to the Public, as amended April 27, 2004, that bars publishing material that "instigates war, national, racial, religious, social and gender hatred." It has the authority to issue administrative fines to newspapers under administrative law or refer cases to law enforcement authorities for criminal prosecution.

In 2000, the Government and the Holy See agreed to establish a military Ordinariat to provide religious support to Roman Catholic members of the military service by means of military chaplains. In 2002, the Ministry of Defense and the Catholic Church signed a regulation on military chaplains' activities. There were sixteen chaplains providing services to the military as of May 2005. The Ministry of Defense provides material support for the Ordinariat and its places of worship. Other traditional churches and religious groups also provide religious support to the military services. The Ordinariat may make requests to the Ministry of Defense to provide religious services for other faiths based on need or requests from service members.

Conscientious objectors may petition for alternative military service within military structures, but there is no option for alternative nonmilitary service, despite requests by members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Persons enrolled in alternative military service must follow military regulations and reside on military installations. They receive assignments to work in nonviolent military roles, such as grounds maintenance, or can work as unskilled laborers in government health or social care institutions.

The constitution establishes that public educational institutions are secular. The Law on Education permits and funds religious instruction only of traditional and state-recognized faiths in public schools. In practice, parents can choose either religious instruction or secular ethics classes for their children. Schools decide which of the traditional religions will be represented in their respective curricula on the basis of requests from parents for children up to age fourteen. (After age fourteen, the pupil decides.) The Ministry of Education and Science had not received any complaints about any school not providing requested religious instruction.

The number of wholly private religious schools in the country is relatively low per capita. There were approximately twenty-five schools with ties to Catholic and Jewish groups, although people of different faiths often attend these schools. Since 2001, all accredited, private schools (religious and nonreligious) receive funding from the Ministry of Education and Science through a voucher system based on the number of pupils. The voucher system covers program but not capital costs of school operation. Founders generally bear responsibility for covering capital outlays; however, the Ministry of Education and Science does provide funding for capital costs of traditional religious private schools where an international agreement to do so exists. In 2000, the Government entered into agreement with the Holy See to fully fund private Roman Catholic Schools.

In 2005, religious education in the public schools was provided to 277,000 students (Roman Catholic); 378 (Greek Catholic); 802 (Evangelical Lutheran); 117 (Evangelical Reformed Lutheran); 4,183 (Russian Orthodox); 28 (Old Believer); 249 (Jewish); and 17 (Muslim). A total of 232,000 studied ethics.

Religious holidays include Assumption Day (August 15), St. Mary's celebration (January 1), Easter Monday, All Saints' Day (November 1), Christmas, and Boxing Day (December 26). There were no reports of formal complaints that these agreements adversely affect religious freedom for the adherents of other religions.

An interministerial commission coordinates investigations of religious groups. It seeks to ensure that activities of religious groups are in line with the principles of a democratic society, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. The Minister of Justice appoints the chairperson of the commission, which also comprises representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the State Security Department. The Government established the commission following some parliamentarians' calls for increased control of "sects." In 2003, the commission investigated the conditions under which religious, esoteric, and spiritual groups may spread their faith via educational institutions. In particular, the commission looked at how many groups were renting premises from public educational institutions. The commission also investigated the alleged involvement of Satanists in the desecration of cemeteries. In 2004, the commission began an investigation of both "magic and the occult on television" and offers of "magical services" by, for example, psychics and astrologers. In May 2005, the local Council of Bishops also raised concerns about "shamanism," and objected also to the municipal government's funding of public Tai Chi classes in Vilnius.

In March 2004, Parliament established a Working Group on Issues of Spiritual and Religious Groups in response to complaints from persons whose relatives had allegedly been harmed by religious "sects." The group reviewed legislation regulating activities of religious groups and

aired plans to introduce tougher registration requirements. Following parliamentary debates on "destructive sects and cults," terms that encompass both recognized and unrecognized religious groups, Parliament approved changes to the Criminal Code in July 2004. The changes to the Criminal Code introduced fines and imprisonment of up to three years for religious groups, communities, and centers that use psychological violence to persuade a person or his/her relative to take illegal action or prevent him/her from pursuing legal action.

The Government continued to engage in efforts that foster religious tolerance and understanding. In 2005, Parliament commemorated Holocaust Day by publicly acknowledging and apologizing for the killing of Jews and destruction of Jewish culture in the country during World War II. The Prime Minister attended the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of Holocaust Day in Auschwitz.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

While registered religious communities can act as legal entities, they do not receive regular subsidies, tax exemptions, social benefits, or exemptions from the military enjoyed by traditional communities. In April 2006, the Government allocated \$1,171,000 (3,279,000 litas) to traditional religious communities for capital costs associated with houses of worship, schools, and other facilities. No other religious communities received this particular type of support, but funds from municipal or other government sources may be available for their use.

Based on an April 27, 2005, decision, the state additionally funds social security and healthcare contributions for spiritual leaders of only traditional and state-recognized religious communities. Other religious communities must pay for these benefits on behalf of their spiritual leaders.

For the fourth consecutive year, Parliament deferred granting "state-recognized religion" status to the United Methodist Church of Lithuania. The Pentecostals (Evangelical Belief Christian Union) applied for state-recognized status in late 2004, and their application was pending parliamentary consideration. The Ministry of Justice recommended the application of the Seventh-day Adventists to Parliament to become a state-recognized religion. At the end of the period covered by the report, there were no final decisions in these three cases.

The Ministry of Justice did not recommend the New Apostolic Church of Lithuania to Parliament for consideration as a state-recognized religion. The ministry argued that the community could not be considered a part of the country's historical, cultural, and social heritage, largely because of its small membership.

Since 1995, the Ministry of Justice has turned down two initial registration applications, those of the Osho Ojas Meditation Center and the Lithuanian Pagans Community (Old Sorcerers). In February 2005, the Government issued a registration permit to the Osho Ojas Meditation Center following the Center's successful appeal of the Ministry's two previous denials.

In early 2002, the Government established a commission on communal property restitution. The commission's task was to identify communal property eligible for restitution and to propose amendments to the law, enabling the secular Jewish community to benefit from the restitution process. The Ministry of Justice expected to submit the amendments to the Parliament in 2006, but progress was slowed by the collapse of the governing coalition and by disagreements among different Jewish groups within the country.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees in the country.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Anti-Semitism

There were a few incidents of anti-Semitic remarks by extremist politicians during the reporting period. The country's Jewish communities publicly expressed their concerns when anti-Semitic remarks occurred. The political leadership of the country and most media outlets generally criticized anti-Semitic statements when they occurred.

The chairperson of the Jewish Community attributed public expressions of anti-Semitism to ignorance and the failure of society to recognize the extent of the destruction that occurred in the country.

In April 2006, neo-Nazis marked the birthday of National Socialist leader Adolf Hitler by dressing up in SS-style uniforms. A member of Parliament and television commentators denounced the neo-Nazis' acts.

An August 2005 "bulletin" stamped with the Lithuanian Liberty Union (LLU) party's seal urged people not to trust a bank in Lithuania because Latvian Jews allegedly established it. The bank brought suit against the LLU, alleging instigation of ethnic hatred towards Jews, and the State Security Department conducted an investigation. The nonparliamentary LLU has not pursued other such activities, and its leader, former mayor of Kaunas and former MP Vytautas Sustauskas, no longer held public office.

In May 2005, four to six motorcyclists wearing Nazi-style uniforms drove past the Lithuanian Jewish Community headquarters in Vilnius. Members of the community were outside and heard the riders yell Nazi epithets as they drove by. This incident occurred the same day as the opening of the motorcycle season in the country, with more than 700 bikers gathering in a nearby park. The mayor immediately asked the police to look into the incident. Police identified several suspects but did not apprehend anyone. The case remained open.

Fringe and anti-Semitic groups gained attention through public anti-Semitic statements. In April 2005, a Siauliai City Council member founded a nationalist political party with anti-Semitic policies. A plank of the party's platform is to stop the Jewish communal property restitution process. In June 2005, several politicians and government officials immediately and publicly denounced the politician's statements, and the State Security Department recommended bringing charges. At the end of this reporting period, a pre-trial investigation was underway.

Beginning in 2005, international Jewish groups expressed concern about the recent construction of a commercial/residential complex on or near (the matter is in dispute) the grounds of a historically significant Jewish cemetery in Vilnius. The Russian Czar closed the cemetery in 1831 and constructed fortifications on part of the land. The Soviets subsequently destroyed visible vestiges of the cemetery, disturbing graves and constructing a sports complex on the site. The Government has opened a dialogue with international Jewish groups to address concerns about development plans for the area.

In April 2004, the police launched an investigation into the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in the Kaisiadorys region; they had not found any of the perpetrators at the end of the period covered by this report. The case remained open.

In February 2004, the popular national daily Respublika carried a series of editorials with obvious anti-Semitic overtones, under the title "Who Rules the World?" Government officials at the highest levels condemned the publication of the series and the anti-Semitic sentiments therein, but the Jewish community and others criticized the Government for responding too slowly. Local nongovernmental organizations and representatives of other religious groups similarly denounced the anti-Semitic articles. The Prosecutor General's Office and the State Security Department launched pretrial investigations over incitement of ethnic and racial hatred by Respublika's editor-in-chief. In April 2004, Parliament formed a working group to strengthen legislation prohibiting incitement of discord, anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia. In January 2005, the Journalist Ethics Inspectorate fined Respublika \$2,200 (6,000 litas) for ethical lapses. In February 2005, the Prosecutor General's Office dropped the investigation, but then quickly resumed it at the urging of the president and senior government officials. In May 2005, a Vilnius administrative court fined the editor-in-chief of the Russian-language version of Respublika \$370 (1,000 litas) for dissemination of a publication that instigates national, racial or religious discord. Prosecutors also pursued the editor and owner of Respublika, but the Supreme Administrative Court in September 2005 terminated the case against the editor and cancelled a fine of \$1,200 (3,000 litas). The Supreme Administrative Court annulled the ruling on a "double-jeopardy" principle as the prosecutors were simultaneously pursuing both administrative and criminal punishment for violation of the same law. In November, the Prosecutor General's Office petitioned the Supreme Administrative Court to reconsider the case against the paper's editor and owner. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

Anti-Semitic comments also occurred on unscreened Internet blogs.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

During the period covered by the report, the state register of legal entities registered ten religious communities, one nontraditional and nine traditional religious communities. The state did not deny registration to any applicant religious group.

Since early 2004, the Ministry of Justice had delayed registration of a Unification Church community in response to parental protests and the objections of a self-proclaimed "anti-cult" group. After reviewing the evidence against the Church, the Ministry determined that the protesters' claims of abuse on the part of the Unification Church in Lithuania were baseless and issued the registration permit in January 2005.

In June 2005, the Journalist Ethics Inspectorate established a new edition of the Code of Journalist Ethics barring journalists and public information producers from insulting a person on the basis of religious beliefs.

In September 2005, the Constitutional Court upheld a decision of the Government to close a Chechen web site for inciting ethnic and religious hatred.

In October 2005, Siauliai Prosecutors brought charges of inciting religious hatred against seven individuals for disrupting a menorah celebration in Siauliai in 2003. The court heard from witnesses in January 2006, and the case continued.

In September 2004, the president awarded the Life Saving Cross to fifty-five persons who worked to save Jews during the Holocaust. He commended their selflessness and recognized the substantial number of people who perished during the Holocaust.

The Government continued its efforts to support post-World War II restitution efforts. In February 2005, the Government reiterated its commitment to Jewish property restitution during meetings with the Jewish Community. In November 2004, the Vilnius city government participated in erecting a monument at the site of a former Jewish cemetery.

Following a Klaipeda district court ruling overturning fines and one-year jail sentences for two members of Jehovah's Witnesses, the Government organized a working group to explore the possibility of introducing alternative service in nonmilitary structures for conscientious objectors. The working group found that twenty-three of the twenty-five recent conscientious objectors accepted service in noncombatant military positions. Rather than create a separate program of alternative nonmilitary service for the few conscientious objectors, the Government decided to waive their military service obligation.

Section III. Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The generally amicable relations among various religious communities in society contributed to religious freedom, although members of

religious minorities occasionally were targets of acts of intolerance, such as insults.

Disputing factions within some religious communities, for example within evangelical, Old Believer, and Jewish communities, periodically appealed to official authorities and courts to limit the activities of their rivals, sometimes by opposing a certain faction's registration as a religious community. The Government attempted not to involve itself in internal disputes of religious communities. In April and June 2003, however, Vilnius administrative courts ruled to create separate new Old Believer communities in response to a conflict within the Old Believer community. In May 2004, the Jewish community temporarily closed the Vilnius synagogue following a disorderly dispute in the synagogue between members of the Orthodox and the Chabad Lubavich Jewish groups. The community closed the synagogue again in August 2004, following another disturbance. The Government charged the leader of the Chabad Lubavich community with assault and trespassing in the second occurrence, but subsequently dropped the charges. The synagogue remained closed pending resolution of the community's internal disputes.

Activities of some nontraditional religions raised concerns within segments of society. Since 2003, for example, some parents opposed their children's membership in the Unification Church and protested the registration of a second Unification Church community. (The first community was registered in 1993.) The ministry approved the registration in January 2005.

An estimated 10 percent of the pre-World War II population was Jewish. More than 200,000 Jews (approximately 95 percent of the immediately prewar Jewish population) died as victims of the Holocaust. The country is still working to understand its past better and to make just recompense for its Holocaust legacy. In 1998, President Valdas Adamkus established a historical commission to investigate crimes of both the Holocaust and the subsequent Soviet occupation. The commission has held annual conferences and several seminars, published several reports, and co-sponsored a Holocaust education program.

In February 2006, the newspaper Respublika reprinted caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, previously published in the Danish press, drawing sharp criticism from religious leaders of all faiths and from government leaders. The incident was under investigation as a violation of the Public Information Law but no charges were filed by the end of the period covered by this report.

In September 2005, Respublika ran a series of articles attacking the work of the Soros-funded Open Society Institute. The London Economist noted the "new attacks are also aimed at religious and political figures only indirectly connected with the Soros foundation."

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The U.S. embassy maintained a close and regular dialogue on religious issues with senior officials in the Government, members of Parliament, and presidential advisors, as well as continual contact with religious leaders. Religious groups used the embassy as a vehicle to voice their complaints, and the embassy encouraged religious leaders to share their views on the status of religious freedom and to raise complaints. The embassy was active in discussing the restitution of Jewish communal property with government officials and community leaders in the country. The embassy also maintained regular contact with U.S. missionary groups.

The ambassador publicly criticized anti-Semitic statements in the media and encouraged a similar response from the highest officials of the Government. The embassy also maintained close relations with the Jewish community to monitor the situation.

On September 11, 2005, the embassy organized an interfaith service to commemorate those who lost their lives as a result of ethnic and religious intolerance and terrorism. Roman Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, Muslims, Jews, Orthodox adherents, and Mormons attended the service, as did the ambassador, his counterparts from Russia, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, and President Adamkus. The nationally televised event was the first public ecumenical service ever held in the country.

On October 20, 2005, the embassy hosted a seminar "Mainstreaming equality and diversity: opening the debate with media," which aimed to promote better understanding between the media and national ethnic and religious minorities in the country. Attendees included religious community representatives, the media, and government officials. The ambassador opened the event, and the director general of the Department of National Minorities, the deputy chairman of Parliament, the inspector of journalist ethics, and other experts delivered remarks.

The embassy funded a number of projects with the goal of promoting greater religious tolerance, particularly projects related to building broader understanding of the Holocaust. The ambassador regularly spoke on tolerance issues and hosted a roundtable focusing on tolerance and Holocaust issues at the American Center in May 2005, attended by high school students and members of various religious communities. In the summers of 2004 and 2005, two secondary school teachers participated in a teacher-training initiative in the U.S. that sought to promote and develop Holocaust education. Lithuanian participation is also anticipated in 2006.

In April 2005, the embassy released a public statement condemning anti-Semitism after a politician announced the creation of a nationalist, anti-Semitic political party.

The embassy continually engaged government officials at all levels on issues relating to religious freedom. In March 2004, in response to anti-Semitic articles published in Respublika, the ambassador raised his concerns with the vice-minister of foreign affairs. The embassy also released several public statements, and the ambassador gave interviews condemning the articles. Following such criticism from U.S. and European Union diplomatic representatives, high-level government officials stepped up their condemnation of the articles and of anti-Semitism in general. The foreign minister and prime minister mentioned their concern for the country's international image in their censure of the articles and in calls for a criminal investigation of Respublika's editor-in-chief.

Released on September 15, 2006

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