The Germans Called Them Lithuanians. Lithuania Will Not.

The killers recorded every murdered Jew by sex and age. Lithuania's national encyclopedia records "people" and "the Nazis." Its Foreign Ministry calls the rescuers Lithuanians and the killers "collaborators." I have now put 27 towns on formal notice.

On August 25, 1941, at Antanašė, near Obeliai, 1,160 Jews were shot: 112 men, 627 women and 421 children. We know the breakdown because SS-Standartenführer Karl Jäger, commander of Einsatzkommando 3, the unit that ran these killings in Lithuania, entered it, under Obeliai, in his report of December 1, 1941. The killers knew precisely whom they were killing. They counted the Jewish children separately.

Lithuania's national encyclopedia, the Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija (VLE), published by the Martynas Mažvydas National Library, describes the same massacre in one sentence: "1941 rugpjūtį Antanašės kaime naciai sušaudė 1160 žmonių." In August 1941, the Nazis shot 1,160 people in the village of Antanašė.

The 421 Jewish children have become "people." The killers have become "the Nazis."

A municipal institution in the same district knows better. The Rokiškis Regional Museum's tourism page on Antanašė, as captured for my filing to the district, states that about 120 to 160 soldiers of the Rokiškis guard company and auxiliary policemen of the Obeliai district took part "not only in shooting, but also in escorting and guarding." The same page states that 78 auxiliary policemen from four named units each received a 100-ruble bonus "for participation in the killings." That is the museum's assertion; the archival files behind the payments have not been shown to me, and I have asked for them. The formations themselves are not in doubt. The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania lists the same Rokiškis guard company and the Obeliai, Aleksandravėlė and Kriaunai auxiliary police as perpetrators. A district tourism office is more candid than the national encyclopedia.

Jäger was more candid still. The Antanašė entry sits in the section of his report that he introduced with the words: "the following actions were conducted in cooperation with Lithuanian partisans." The entry itself gives the date, the place and the victims; it does not list the units. But the heading under which Jäger filed it names their nationality. The SS commander who compiled the report wrote "Lithuanian." Eighty-five years later, the Lithuanian state's encyclopedia will not.

The victim's identity was never in doubt

Nobody in 1941 was confused about who was Jewish. In Šiauliai, VLE's own ghetto article records that from July 20, 1941, "Jews had to wear the distinguishing mark, the Star of David; compulsory registration of Jews took place." Lists were made. Badges were sewn on. Jäger's columns separate "Jews," "Jewesses" and "Jewish children," and set apart the occasional "Lithuanian Comm." and "Russian Comm." with clerical care.

Lithuanian memory preserves that precision for the dead. Memorials and municipal pages speak of "žydų tautybės žmonės," people of Jewish nationality. The Alytus Tourism Information Centre's page says that in Vidzgiris forest "people of Jewish nationality were shot and buried in common graves." It does not say who shot them.

That is the pattern in one sentence. The victim's identity is a matter of record. The killer's identity is a matter of discretion.

Twenty-seven towns, one grammar

From October 8, 2026, to the morning of publication on October 18, I sent 105 numbered applications, each signed with a qualified electronic signature, concerning 27 Lithuanian towns. Eighty-eight went to the bodies that publish or register the challenged texts: the encyclopedia, municipalities, tourism centers, museums and the Department of Cultural Heritage. Seventeen asked archives for documents. Twenty-one of the 105 supplement earlier filings. The filings continue; the figures here are fixed as of publication, and the application register is updated separately. Each sets a public sentence beside the record the state already holds. The 27 towns are the scope of the investigation so far, not a claim that every institution in every town words its text identically. These institutions answer to different ministries and municipalities and share no editor. That makes the consistency more striking, not less. The Nazis ordered. Jews were killed. "Local helpers" assisted. The word "Lithuanian" appears for administrators, for "cooperation" and for rescuers. It disappears for the men who shot.

Joniškis, Molėtai district. VLE dates the murder of the town's Jews to "July–August 1944," "on the instruction of the German occupation administration." The heritage register (No. 33595) records an execution on July 24, 1941, "organized by the authorities of Nazi Germany and carried out by the Joniškis white-armband squad [and] the white-armband squad from Raša manor," in which about 70 Jewish men of the town were murdered. The wrong year is a verifiable error by itself. My application on this entry was sent on October 16, 2026; when I re-checked the page on October 17 and 18, it still read 1944. The wrong year is established. Whether it will be corrected is now the editors' decision.

Panevėžys. VLE's "Panevėžio istorija" names the Soviet army and the NKGB as the killers of three doctors and a nurse in June 1941. For August 23, 1941, it writes: "killings of Jews and Soviet collaborators took place (most were killed on 1941 08 23 – 7,523 people)." Jäger's entry for that day reads: "1,312 Jews, 4,602 Jewesses, 1,609 Jewish children." Every one of the 7,523 was Jewish. The encyclopedia merges them with "Soviet collaborators," counts them as "people," and names no killer. The state heritage register entry for the Pajuostė site (No. 11058) names the Lithuanian police 10th battalion as the escort and, according to one participant, about 70 of its men as shooters.

Rainiai. VLE's article on the Rainiai massacre of June 1941 names the Soviet perpetrators down to the prison staff: "a squad of 40–50 Soviet soldiers, prison governor A. Vaitkus and several warders." The murder of the Jews of Telšiai beside the same site appears once, in a parenthesis: "in July 1941, by order of the Nazi occupation authorities, about 840 Telšiai Jews were murdered." That parenthesis is the article's only use of the word "Jew." The information board that the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre installed at the site in 2024, in the text the Centre itself published, states that the execution of the Jewish men held at Rainiai manor was carried out by "camp guards led by German Gestapo men, local policemen and about 50–60 self-defense men of the Telšiai company." The Centre's statement is not proof of who fired; it is proof of what the state's own research body says. The state's research center wrote it on a board in the field. The state's encyclopedia keeps it out of the text.

Šiauliai. In 1941 nobody in Šiauliai was uncertain who was Jewish. VLE's "Šiaulių getas" records the Star of David from July 20 and the "compulsory registration of Jews," and that the ghetto gates were "constantly guarded by the local police." The same article states: "Visą savaitę nuo 1941 06 28 baltaraiščiai masiškai suiminėjo žydus vyrus, juos varė į Šiaulių kalėjimą ir vėliau sušaudė Luponių miške." For a whole week from June 28, 1941, the white-armbanders mass-arrested Jewish men, drove them to Šiauliai prison and later shot them in the Luponiai forest. Now read the town pages of the same encyclopedia. "Kužiai": "Per nacių okupaciją 1941 06–09 Luponių miške prie Kužių nužudyta apie 8000 žydų." During the Nazi occupation, about 8,000 Jews were killed in the Luponiai forest. "Šiaulių istorija": most of the ghetto's Jews were "killed near Kužiai." Same forest, same encyclopedia. The ghetto article describes one part of the Luponiai killings, the Jewish men arrested in the first week; the Kužiai entry covers all of them, about 8,000 people over four months. In the ghetto article the white-armbanders shoot. In the passages of the Kužiai and Šiauliai history entries that describe the killings, nobody does. The heritage register entry for the Luponiai site (No. 11198) records only an execution "organized by the authorities of Nazi Germany." The Lithuanian administration appears in the ghetto article, where it "decided questions of relocating the Jews" together with the Jewish Committee. The encyclopedia holds the information. It does not carry it into the entries where readers meet the killings.

The next three cases show the same pattern repeated.

Gargždai. VLE records only the June 1941 killing, by "the Tilsit Gestapo operational squad." The September 1941 murder of the town's Jewish women and children in the Vėžaitinė forest does not appear. The Department of Cultural Heritage's own 2014 assessment act attributes that massacre to "Gargždai policemen, white-armbanders." The killing the encyclopedia can assign to Germans is recorded. The killing the state assigns to Lithuanians is absent.

Plungė. VLE says about 1,800 Plungė Jews were murdered at Kaušėnai "by order of the Nazi German occupation authorities," and gives dates that conflict with its own Kaušėnai article. The heritage register (No. 11084) states that the execution was "carried out together with the Plungė white-armband squad." The order is named. The local squad is not.

Marijampolė. A 2014 municipal press release on the September 1941 massacre conceded that "well-trained Lithuanian shock troops" took part, then added: "According to the historian, there were no locals among them; they were brought in from elsewhere." VLE's town history states that in September 1941 and early 1942 "5,090 Jews and Soviet activists" ("5090 žydų ir sovietinių aktyvistų") were murdered at Marcinkai "by order of the Nazi German occupation authorities." The figure 5,090 is Jäger's total for a single day, September 1, 1941, at Marijampolė: 1,763 Jewish men, 1,812 Jewish women, 1,404 Jewish children, 109 mentally ill patients, one German woman married to a Jew and one Russian woman. Jäger lists no Soviet activists in that entry. The encyclopedia has borrowed the German number, stretched it over two years and added a category of victim the German document does not contain.

Translation as a second erasure

Where a Lithuanian text does name the killers, the foreign reader may still be shielded. On the Ignalina Tourism Information Centre's Lake Ilgis page, as captured for my filing of October 17, the four language versions read:

- Lithuanian: "Žudynių vykdytojai – Ignalinos baltaraiščiai." (The perpetrators were the Ignalina white-armbanders.)
- English: "The perpetrators of the massacre were Ignalina White Guards."
- German: "Die Täter des Massakers waren Weiße Garden aus Ignalina."
- Russian: "Исполнителями резни были белогвардейцы из Игналинского полка." (The perpetrators were White Guards of the Ignalina regiment.)

In Russian, "белогвардейцы" means the anti-Bolshevik forces of the Russian Civil War, and there was no "Ignalina regiment." I do not claim to know why the translator chose those words. The reader of three of the four versions is not told that the killers were a local Lithuanian auxiliary formation.

The state knows the words

The defense will be that Lithuania has never hidden Lithuanian participation. That defense describes a different layer of the record. VLE's general article "Holokaustas" names the Lithuanian police 1st battalion and the white-armband auxiliary police and concedes that without "the support of the local administration, police and part of the population" the murder "would not have been carried out so quickly." The ghetto articles for Šiauliai, Ukmergė, Švenčionėliai and Kaišiadorys name local white-armbanders and policemen. The heritage register names formations at Pajuostė, Kaušėnai, Joniškis, Utena, Mažeikiai and Strošiūnai. The Centre names them on its boards.

So the omission is not ignorance. It is placement, and it recurs across institutions that do not share an editor. The Lithuanian perpetrators are named in the survey article and the register field that few people read. They vanish from the town entry, the tourism page and the monument, where descendants, students and visitors read. The state preserves the crime while anonymizing the Lithuanian perpetrators. The victims remain named as victims. Their Lithuanian killers disappear into the passive voice.

Rescuers have a nationality

The space emptied of perpetrators is filled with rescuers. On September 24, 2026, the Alytus City Municipality marked the destruction of the town's Jews by calling on residents "to remember the dead, to honor the people who rescued them." Every verb describing the killing was passive. The Ignalina museum titled its Holocaust exhibition "Lives saved…" and named no killer.

The Foreign Ministry applies the same rule abroad. On May 4, 2026, it described a ceremony "dedicated to commemorating and honouring the Lithuanian residents who rescued Jews during the Nazi occupation." The danger those rescuers faced is called "Nazi persecution." At Yad Vashem on June 16, the Ministry noted that "928 Lithuanians who rescued Jews are commemorated" there. In the same text the dead are "Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators." At Paneriai on September 23, the Vilna Ghetto was liquidated by "the Nazi occupation authorities and local collaborators." The rescuers are Lithuanians, counted to the last name. The killers are Nazis and "collaborators," with no nationality at all. I documented the Paneriai text when it appeared, in "Lithuania's MFA Mourns Jews, Omits the Shooters," and the wider formula in "Nazis, Soviets, and Collaborators."

A collaborator can be a murderer, an organizer or a commander. But the bare word, without a unit, a town or a nationality, tells the reader none of that. It conceals who the men were and what they did, and it invites the reader to place the crime in Germany and the Lithuanian at the edge of the frame. The record does not support that proportion. VLE's own "Holokaustas" article identifies "the most important perpetrators of the murder of Lithuania's Jews" as Hamann's mobile unit, "whose core consisted of soldiers of the Lithuanian police 1st battalion." Jäger put the German component of that squad at "8-10 reliable men." Germans organized the genocide. In town after town, the men who rounded up, guarded, escorted and shot the Jews were Lithuanian policemen, auxiliaries and white-armbanders. The Ministry gives a nationality to the rescuers and withholds it from them. I have written before about rescue offered as an alibi.

Why I am filing

I cannot compel Lithuania to change a sentence. I can research, report, write and file, and I have been doing so for a long time. My grandfather's family came from Papilė. Since 2015 I have made dozens of formal submissions to Lithuanian state bodies, before the 105 of this month. I have litigated in Lithuania's courts over the state's account of Jonas Noreika, taken Lithuania to the European Court of Human Rights (Application No. 10930/21, declared inadmissible), petitioned the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, appealed refusals to Lithuania's administrative tribunals, written a book, Malice, Murder and Manipulation (2013), and hundreds of articles, and appeared in documentaries on Lithuania's Holocaust record. The omissions in this article cannot be assessed as isolated slips without also assessing how the institutions responded each time the evidence was put in front of them. I have no illusion that the national institutions will correct this on their own. Two local bodies have. The Akmenė public library rewrote its Papilė entries on October 6, 2026, to name the police chiefs, the security-police officer and the ghetto commandant involved, and the Biržai Tourism Information Centre corrected its page on October 14 to name the Lithuanian police and white-armbanders. I described both in "Two Towns Named the Killers. The National Encyclopedia Did Not." Palanga and Semeliškės are documented in earlier articles and on Times of Israel.

The national encyclopedia has not corrected any challenged town sentence that I re-checked on October 17 and 18, 2026. It has issued no registration number for any of my filings. Its editors replied on October 13, to my Papilė request, that VLE statements rest on research "carried out by scientific institutions before the article was published" and that sources are not cited in the text. They added an external link to the study I cited and left the perpetrator sentence as it was. On October 15, in a reply concerning a different article, which they said is being revised, they wrote that my later requests were "essentially of the same nature, and therefore we are not currently able to answer each of them separately," and that factual information "is updated in light of the latest research." The research has been delivered to them, town by town. Panevėžys's development agency replied that Jewish killing sites are "more meaningfully presented in specialized publications or thematic routes," not in general tourist literature.

That is why the filings are formal, signed with a qualified electronic signature, numbered, dated and copied. Each application quotes the public sentence, quotes the record that contradicts it, and asks for a correction and a reasoned answer. The supplements went in copy to the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History and the head of Lithuania's IHRA delegation.

The purpose is evidentiary, and the evidence is graded. My sent-mail record shows what was transmitted, to which address and when. Registration numbers from the Department of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Culture, the Genocide Centre and several municipalities show the filings entered their document systems. The encyclopedia's two letters show its editors received my submissions and responded with an account of their general methodology; on the dates I inspected, the challenged town sentences were unchanged. None of this proves that any individual read every page, or that an institution may not dispute my reading of a source. It does establish that the sources were supplied through the institution's own channel, on a known date, with a specific correction requested. No institution will be able to say later that nobody identified the omission, nobody supplied the record or nobody asked. This article is a public reference to those findings. It does not prove that any particular institution read it. The proof of notice is the applications themselves, each transmitted, numbered and, where the institution complied, registered. I cannot prove what any editor privately intends. I can prove what each institution was told, when, and what it did next. An omission repeated across independent institutions, and maintained after documented notice, supports the inference that it is deliberate. That inference grows with every month the sentences stand.

Who answers?

The international bodies do not offer an individual a door. When I petitioned the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance about Lithuania's record, its Secretariat replied on August 20, 2026, that "there is no process for external submission of petitions." I then asked Lithuania's own IHRA delegation to place the matter before the Alliance. On October 8, 2026, the Foreign Ministry refused, saying it has no duty to forward requests to international organizations. I have appealed that decision to the Administrative Disputes Commission.

So the questions go to the Jewish organizations that speak for the dead in public. Which of them will accept a documented, town-by-town complaint? Which will ask Lithuania's institutions, in writing, for a source-based answer, and return to the matter when none comes? Preservation is one task, advocacy another, diplomacy a third. None is enforcement, and no one has claimed the last task. A file that every institution has received and none has acted on is the condition the dead are left in.

What the law already says

Lithuania is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion lists, as distortion, "intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of the Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany." Converting murdered Jewish children into "people," assigning every killing to "the Nazis," and filing Lithuanian policemen under "local helpers" minimizes the collaborators. The IHRA definition is not legally binding, and notice does not by itself prove intent. But each time an institution keeps the same wording after receiving specific sources, an explanation based on innocent oversight becomes harder to sustain. That is especially so where, as with the encyclopedia, the institution has replied in writing without engaging the evidence it was sent. The question of intention is now one the institutions must answer.

Lithuania's own Supreme Court, in its December 9, 2025, ruling in the Paleckis case (No. 2K-173-1073/2025), treated omissions and the removal of responsible persons from an account of international crimes as capable of minimizing them. The court was not ruling on the

encyclopedia, and I do not suggest it was. The question is why a principle Lithuania's highest court applies to crimes against Lithuanians should carry no weight when the state's own publisher describes crimes against Jews.

None of this assigns guilt to a nation. Some Lithuanians rescued Jews and risked their lives to do it. The Germans organized the genocide, and that responsibility is not diminished by one word. The demand is specificity: name the unit, the town police, the white-armband squad, as the state's own register and research center already do. Collective innocence is no more accurate than collective guilt.

Lithuanian law knows what a Lithuanian is

The state that cannot find a nationality for the killers defines nationality with precision whenever it chooses to.

Lithuanian law distinguishes citizenship (pilietybė) from nationality in the ethnic sense (tautybė). The Law on Citizenship (No. XI-1196) grants special rights to a "person of Lithuanian descent," defined as "a person whose parents or grandparents or one of the parents or grandparents are or were Lithuanians and who considers himself Lithuanian and declares it by written statement." The law looks back two generations and asks whether a person's grandparents "were Lithuanians." The test reaches back to the generation of 1941.

In July 2014 the Seimas amended the passport law so that, from January 1, 2015, a citizen's nationality can again be recorded in a passport, on written request. The state records ethnic nationality when a citizen asks it to.

In 1941 the distinction was applied to Jews with lethal precision. Registration, the Star of David badge, the ghetto and Jäger's columns all depended on knowing exactly who was a Jew. VLE's own article "Getas" states that "the Nazis and the Lithuanian administration carrying out their instructions" began establishing ghettos from July 1941.

So the category exists in law, in passports and in the encyclopedia's own record of 1941. It is used for the dead, for the rescuers and for grandchildren seeking citizenship. The state also knows how to apply it to perpetrators: the encyclopedia's general Holocaust and ghetto articles, the heritage register and the Centre's boards sometimes do so explicitly. What it does not do is carry that identification into the town histories, monuments, tourism pages and ministry statements where the public meets each massacre. The identification is selective, not absent. The question is not whether Lithuania can say "Lithuanian." It is why, town after town, it declines to say it where the killing is described.

The choice

Lithuania restored its independence 36 years ago. The Holocaust ended 81 years ago. The archives are open, the register is written and the Centre's boards are standing in the forests. Nothing remains to be discovered before the encyclopedia can write one word.

The killers wrote "Jews," "Jewesses" and "Jewish children" in their ledgers. Their commander filed the killings under the heading "in cooperation with Lithuanian partisans." The Lithuanian state encyclopedia writes "people" and "the Nazis." The Foreign Ministry writes "Lithuanians" only when it means rescuers. The murderers' own paperwork is more truthful than the state that

inherited their crime scenes. Across 27 towns, after 105 applications, it is no longer credible to treat that pattern as a series of drafting accidents. Each institution's next decision on its own sentence will show whether it is a choice.

The test from here is measurable. For each contested passage the record will show what the source says, what correction was requested, when the request was transmitted, whether receipt was acknowledged and what decision followed. Each institution that publishes or registers a challenged text has been sent a numbered application naming the sentence, the source and the correction requested. The supplements also went, in copy, to the Lithuanian Jewish Community, the Vilna Gaon Museum, the Genocide Centre and Lithuania's IHRA delegation; copying them does not make them responsible for the encyclopedia, but they cannot credibly deny that the materials were sent to their institutional addresses. Whether anyone read them will be shown, or not, by their acknowledgments and replies. I will publish the acknowledgments, refusals and corrections as they arrive. On September 30, I wrote to eight American and international Jewish organizations about their participation in the Foreign Minister's New York meeting of September 23 and asked what diligence preceded it; as of October 17, none had answered. Those who choose, after notice, to help Lithuania present itself as a nation of rescuers must live with their own conscience. Their choices, like the encyclopedia's, are now part of the record.

Evidence index

- Jäger report, December 1, 1941 (English translation): Jewish Virtual Library
- VLE town entries quoted: Antanašė, Rainių žudynės, Panevėžio istorija, Gargždai, Plungė, Kaušėnai, Joniškis (Molėtai), Marijampolės istorija, Kužiai, Šiaulių istorija
- VLE entries naming Lithuanian perpetrators: Holokaustas, Šiaulių getas, Getas
- Foreign Ministry: May 4, 2026, June 16, 2026, September 23, 2026
- Lithuanian law: Law on Citizenship No. XI-1196 (official English translation); passport nationality entry, Baltic Times, July 11, 2014
- IHRA: Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion
- Cultural Heritage Register entries cited by number: 11058 (Pajuostė), 11084 (Kaušėnai), 33595 (Joniškis, Molėtai), 10971 (Gargždai, 2014 assessment act), 11272 (Rainiai), 11198 (Luponiai), searchable at kvr.kpd.lt
- Applications cited: register of the 105 numbered filings of October 8–18, 2026 (code, date and time sent, town, addressees): LHPRC Application Register. Sent-mail records, registration numbers and institutional replies are held by the author.
- Inspection dates: VLE entries quoted in this article were inspected on October 17 and 18, 2026; Foreign Ministry pages and the VLE Šiauliai, Kužiai, Getas and Marijampolė entries again on October 18, 2026.
- Published at: https://grantgochin.substack.com/p/the-germans-called-them-lithuanians