

**David Lau**  
Chief Rabbi Of Israel  
President of The Chief Rabbinic Council



**דוד לאו**  
הרב הראשי לישראל  
נשיא מועצת הרבנות הראשית

בס"ד, כ' טבת, תשע"ח  
January 7, 2018  
קבע-145.עח

To  
**Dalia Grybauskaite**  
**Lithuanian President**

Dear President,

**Regarding: The Old Jewish Cemetery – Vilnius**

The link between the Jews of Lithuania and its land is inextricable. For centuries, many Jews have lived throughout this country and it has been a source of inspiration for wonderful works pertaining to the Torah. The world of yeshivas, which is the breeding ground for the wisdom of the Jewish Torah, was able to establish central 'batei midrash' [Jewish study halls] on Lithuanian soil.

In recent years, remnants of the Jewish community are still being found in certain places in Lithuania. Unfortunately, the remains left behind by Jewish communities are disappearing; I think that this heritage should be preserved, and that it is a source of pride for both the Lithuanian people and the Jewish people.

In the above-mentioned cemetery, which is found on the Viliyah – Neris River, in a region called Šnipiškės, are buried the remains and bodies of tens of thousands of Jews.

I have recently been informed that there was an intention to destroy the large gymnasium that was built on the cemetery and to turn the area into a conference center. This activity will severely damage the remains of the bodies that are found in this holy land. According to Jewish law, this is forbidden in any way. I do not think that there is any Jewish Torah element that has the authority to decide that such a thing is permissible.

As the Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel and as the President of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, I maintain constant and continuous contact with most of the rabbis in the world, and especially with the leaders among them, and in the opinion of all, it is forbidden to modify the current situation.

I appeal to you to do as much as possible to prevent any harm to the martyrs of Israel and to those buried there and not to desecrate this holy cemetery.

I would like to express my gratitude and respect for your work on behalf of others and my appreciation for the values according to which you conduct your policy.



With greatest appreciation and respect

**David Lau**  
**Chief Rabbi of Israel**