

LITHUANIA COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

October 2001

Country Information and Policy Unit

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1. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information & Policy Unit, Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom

1.3 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4 It is intended to revise the assessment on a 6-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5 The assessment will be placed in the Immigration & Nationality Directorate website on the Internet (<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK
Immigration Advisory Service
Immigration Appellate Authority
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
JUSTICE
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
Refugee Council
Refugee Legal Centre
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

2 GEOGRAPHY

The Location of Lithuania

2.1 The Republic of Lithuania (formerly the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic) is situated on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in north-eastern Europe. It is bounded by Latvia to the north, by Belarus to the south-east, by Poland to the south-west and by the territory of the Russian Federation around Kaliningrad to the west. **[1a]**

2.2 The population of Lithuania at 1 January 1999 was estimated at 3,701,253. The capital city is Vilnius. Other large towns are Kaunas, Siauliai and Panevezys. The official language of the country is Lithuanian. **[1a]**

3. HISTORY

A. Recent Political History

3.1 Lithuania's first Constitution, which declared Lithuania a parliamentary democracy, was adopted in August 1922. However, in December 1926 Antanas Smetona seized power in a military coup d'etat and established an authoritarian regime which lasted until 1940. The Nazi-Soviet Treaty on Friendship and Existing Borders agreed in September 1939 (following the outbreak of World War II) permitted the USSR to take control of

Lithuania. In return, the USSR returned the city and region of Vilnius to Lithuania from Poland, who had held it since the twenties. In June 1940 the USSR dispatched yet further troops to Lithuania and forced the Lithuanian Government to resign. A Soviet-controlled People's Government was then formed. Following the invasion of USSR by German forces in July 1941 around 135,000 (90%) of Lithuania's Jewish population were murdered. The return of Soviet forces in 1944 was not welcomed by most Lithuanians. Nevertheless, traditional features of Soviet rule were swiftly introduced into the country. Lithuanian political parties were disbanded and political power became the exclusive preserve of the Communist Party of Lithuania (CPL), the local branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Some 150,000 people perceived as political enemies were deported, and leaders and members of the Roman Catholic Church were persecuted and imprisoned. Partisan activity against Soviet rule continued until the late-1950s until finally stamped out by ruthless Soviet reprisals. **[1a] [2]**

3.2 A significant dissident movement was established during the 1960s and 1970s. There were demonstrations in Kaunas in May 1972 in support of demands for religious and political freedom. In June 1988, the Lithuanian Movement for Reconstruction (Sajudis) was established. It organised mass demonstrations to protest against environmental pollution, the suppression of national culture and "Russification", and appealed to the CPL to support a declaration of independence and the recognition of Lithuanian as a state language. The latter demand was adopted by the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet (legislature) in November 1988, and traditional state symbols were restored. The CPL then began to adopt a more radical position in an attempt to regain some measure of popular support. Nevertheless, Sajudis remained the dominant political force, and its supporters won an overall majority in the elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet in February and March 1990. This new pro-independence parliament elected Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of Sajudis as its Chairman (de facto President of Lithuania) and on 11 March 1990 declared the restoration of Lithuanian independence. Lithuania was the first of the Soviet republics to make such a declaration. The Lithuanian declarations were condemned by a special session of the all-Union Congress of People's Deputies as "unconstitutional" and Soviet (OMON) forces occupied the CPL buildings in Vilnius and took control of newspaper-printing presses. The Soviet Union imposed an economic embargo on Lithuania in April 1990 which remained in force until Lithuania agreed a six-month moratorium on the independence declaration, two months later. There was no further progress however until mid-January 1991 when 13 people were killed, and about 500 injured when Soviet troops seized the broadcasting centre in Vilnius. The military intervention strengthened popular support for independence. A referendum on the issue took place on 9 February 1991 in which 90.5% of the voters expressed support for the re-establishment of an independent Lithuania and the withdrawal of the USSR army. The Soviet coup against Gorbachev on 19 August 1991 collapsed on 21 August, allowing the Baltic States to press their bid for independence. Yeltsin recognised their independence, on behalf of Russia, on 24 August, and the UK did so, along with the rest of the European Community, on 27 August. On 6 September 1991, the USSR State Council recognised the independence of Lithuania (as well as Latvia and Estonia) and the country was admitted to the UN and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe later that month. The organisers of the attempted coup were found guilty in August 1999 and six were sentenced to long periods of imprisonment. The remaining 51 defendants are said to be in hiding in Russia and Belarus. **[17e] [40]**

3.3 The Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) prevailed in the 1996 parliamentary elections, followed by the Christian Democratic Party. The two parties formed a coalition government (the first in Lithuania's history). **[3]**

3.4 In February 1998 Valdas Adamkus was elected President of Lithuania for a five-year term, defeating Arturas Paulauskas in the second round by a narrow majority.

Lithuanian-born Mr Adamkus fought in the local resistance against the Red Army before fleeing to the US in 1944, where he acquired American citizenship and followed a career in public administration. Following retirement, he returned to Lithuania to take part in the 1997-98 presidential election campaign after overturning a court ruling on his ineligibility as a non-resident. He subsequently relinquished his US citizenship. **[46b]**

3.5 Gediminas Vagnorius resigned as Prime Minister in May 1999, following criticism by the President over corruption within the privatisation programme and the slow pace of progress towards EU accession. He was succeeded by former Vilnius mayor Rolandas Paksas who, at the time, was a member of the Homeland Union (Conservatives). The Christian Democrats ended their formal coalition agreement with the Homeland Union in June, but maintained their ministers in the cabinet and continued to support the government in parliament. Paksas resigned the premiership in October 1999 following a dispute over an oil refinery privatisation contract (and subsequently became leader of the Liberal Union); he was succeeded as Prime Minister by Andrius Kubilius on 29 October 1999 - making this the tenth government since 1991. **[4][24d][46b][3a]**

3.6 Municipal elections were held in March 2000. Compared with the results of the 1995 municipal elections, there was much less support for candidates representing the five main 'traditional' parties, particularly those on the right. Candidates of the New Union (Social Liberals) gained the highest percentage of seats on local councils (16%); those standing for the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservative party) secured only 11% of all seats. **[41b][41c]**

The October 2000 Parliamentary Elections

3.7 Following amendments to the Election Law in July 2000 (see 4.10), twenty-seven parties or coalitions registered to participate in the Lithuanian general election on 8 October 2000. OSCE had already decided not to monitor the elections, stating that conditions for democratic, free and fair elections in Lithuania were well established.

[6a] [12d]

3.8 No party won an outright majority. The left-of-centre Social Democratic Coalition, led by former President Algirdas Brazauskas and comprising the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP), the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (SDP), New Democracy (formerly the Women's Party) and the Union of Russians, won 51 of the 141 seats in the Seimas. The centrist Liberal Union and New Union secured 34 and 29 seats respectively. The formerly ruling centre-right Homeland Union-Lithuanian Conservatives won only 9 seats. Eleven of the 27 parties which took part failed to gain any seats.

	SINGLE- MEMBER CONSTITUENCIES	PARTY LISTS	TOTAL SEATS
Social Democratic Coalition (including LDLP)	23	28	51
Lithuanian Liberal Union	18	16	34
New Union (Social Liberals)	11	18	29
Homeland Union – Lithuanian Conservatives	1	8	9
Lithuanian Peasants Party	4		4
Christian Democratic Party	2		2
Centre Union	2		2
Poles' Electoral Action	2		2
Modern Christian Democratic Union	1		1
Other parties	4		4
Independents	3		3
TOTAL SEATS	71	70	141

3.9 After the election, on 12 October, the Lithuanian Liberal Union, New Union, Centre Union (CU) and Modern Christian Democratic Union (MCDU) entered into a formal coalition known as the *New Policy Bloc*, with 66 seats in parliament – ahead of the 51 seats of Brazauskas's Social Democratic Coalition. The agreement provided for Liberal Union leader Rolandas Paksas to become Prime Minister, while NU leader Arturas Paulauskas would become Chairman (Speaker) of the Seimas. The President accordingly nominated Paksas to form a government; this achieved the support of 79 of the 141 members of the Seimas on 26 October 2000. **[47][46a][17h][17i]**

Change of Government, June-July 2001

3.10 Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas (and his Government) resigned on 20 June 2001 after seven months in office; this followed the resignation from the Cabinet of the six New Union-Social Liberal Ministers due to policy disagreements relating to the privatisation of Lietuvos Dujos (Lithuanian Gas), a proposed reduction in capital gains tax, and other issues. On 22 June, the New Policy Bloc coalition disintegrated after negotiations failed to produce agreement between the NU and the other three parties. Economy Minister Eugenijus Gentvilas was appointed acting Prime Minister pending the nomination of a new Prime Minister by President Adamkus. **[12f, 60a]**

3.11 On 26 June, the left-of-centre Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, under Algirdas Brazauskas, entered into a working agreement with the New Union-Social Liberal and New Democracy parties which would secure a majority in the Seimas; the Peasants' Party subsequently also joined this loose coalition. **[9aa]**

3.12 On 29 June, President Adamkus nominated Algirdas Brazauskas to be Prime Minister and this appointment was ratified by the Seimas on 3 July. New Union leader Arturas Paulauskas retained his position as Chairman (Speaker) of the Seimas, and Brazauskas has included in his thirteen-member Cabinet the six NU-nominated Ministers who had previously served in Rolandas Paksas' government. **[15c]**

B. Recent Economic History

3.13 Since independence, Lithuania has made steady progress in developing a market economy. Over 40% of state property, in addition to most housing and small businesses, has been privatised. Trade is diversifying and expanding both to the East and the West. The largest number of residents are employed in agriculture, followed by industrial enterprises and wholesale and retail trade. About 31.6% of those employed work for state enterprises. **[3a][24a]**

3.14 During the early 1990s the government embarked upon a comprehensive programme of market-orientated reforms, including the transfer to private ownership of state-owned enterprises and the adoption of measures to encourage foreign investment. However, the increase in fuel prices and the disruption of trading relations with countries of the former USSR led to a severe decline in industrial productivity and a consequent deterioration in living standards. By the mid-1990s the government's stabilisation programme had achieved modest success: development of the private sector, initially through a voucher privatisation scheme, was well advanced, and by December 1995 approximately 83% of all state assets had been privatised; most prices are liberalised; reform of the legal system had been introduced; and some progress was achieved in the restructuring of the financial sector. **[9m]**

3.15 Lithuania's economic situation has improved since the end of 1999; whereas Real GDP had declined by 4.1% from 1998 to 1999, a growth of 3.3% in Real GDP was achieved in 2000. Nevertheless, unemployment has continued to rise, partly as a result of economic restructuring. The overall rate of unemployment reached 13.2% in the first quarter of 2001, compared with 6.5% at the end of 1998 - but was down slightly to 12.1% by July-August 2001. Consumer price inflation averaged 1.0% in 2000, from over 24% in 1996. **[14c][46c]**

4 INSTRUMENTS OF STATE

A. The Lithuanian Government

4.1 Under the terms of the Constitution **[23]** which was approved in a national referendum in October 1992, supreme legislative authority resides with the Seimas which has 141 members elected by universal adult suffrage for a four-year term. The President of the Republic (who is Head of State) is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year period and a maximum of two consecutive terms). Executive power is vested in the Council of Ministers. This is headed by the Prime Minister, who is appointed and dismissed by the President with the approval of the Seimas. For administrative purposes, Lithuania is divided into 10 districts (sub-divided into 56 municipalities). **[1a]**

4.2 The Parliament has continued to operate in a satisfactory way. Its powers are respected and the opposition plays a full part in its activities. In September 1997, a European Affairs Committee was established at the Seimas. **[8a]**

4.3 The Seimas Ombudsmen's Office investigates citizens' complaints concerning any state or local government officials who have allegedly abused their official position. The jurisdiction of this office does not encompass the activities of the President, members of parliament, or judges. **[10a]** The Seimas passed a law on 8 July 1999, determining the principles of public service, the status of a public servant and the legal foundation for the country's public service system. People who have a criminal record or persons who had previously been employed by the Soviet KGB cannot seek posts in the Lithuanian public service system. The law is to be implemented in full in two – five years. **[9a]** In

October 1999 the Seimas adopted a universal vetting law on the registration and protection of persons who had confessed to their participation in the activities of Soviet secret services in the period from 1940-90. [24b]

4.4 A law on Compatibility of Public and Private Interests in the Public Service was enacted in July 1997. Its purpose was to secure the impartiality of decisions and to prevent the emergence and spread of corruption in the public service. In the implementation of this law, the High Commissioner of Ethics in Office adopted, in March and April 2000, rules on the public declaration of private interests of civil servants and local government officials; those concerned were required to submit detailed declarations by 15 May 2000. Incidents of alleged corruption in the public service have been investigated and prosecuted by the Special Investigation Service, an independent body accountable to the Seimas and the President. From July 1999 to April 2000, 132 lawsuits were filed; 83 civil servants and public officials were charged with offences. It is reported that corruption occurs mainly in the context of public procurement bills and the award of government contracts. [8c][14c]

B. The Lithuanian Constitution

4.5 The Lithuanian Constitution was approved in a national referendum on 25 October 1992 and was adopted by the Seimas on 6 November 1992. The Republic of Lithuania is an independent and democratic republic; its sovereignty is vested in the people, who exercise their supreme power either directly or through their democratically elected representatives. The powers of the State are exercised by the Seimas, the President of the Republic, the Government and the Judiciary. The most significant issues concerning the State and the people are decided by referendum. [1] [23]

4.6 In accordance with the 1992 Constitution, the rights and freedom of individuals are inviolable. Property is inviolable and the rights of ownership are protected by law. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are guaranteed. All persons are equal before the law. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion or opinion. [1]

C. The Civil Code

4.7 Parliament approved the new Civil Code in July 2000. It will go into effect on 1 July 2001. The first volume contains general provisions; the second "Persons" regulates legal status of physical persons and corporate entities; the third "Family Law" defines legal relations for families; the fourth "Property Law" regulates separate property rights, their execution and defence; the fifth "Inheritance Law" defines legal rights of inheritance and the sixth "Service Law" is dedicated to the common lot of obligation and the legal regulation of different kinds of agreements. The new Civil Code is in accord with EU law and international legal Acts. [9o]

D. The Right of Citizens to Change their Government

4.8 Article 33 of the Constitution provides that citizens shall have the right to participate in the government of their State both directly and through their freely elected representatives and shall have the equal opportunity to serve in a State office of the Republic of Lithuania. The right to be elected is provided for by the Constitution and by the election laws. [10]

4.9 Political parties and political organisations have to be registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. [24c] The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of

Lithuania has the right to suspend the activities of a political party or a political organisation if it violates the Constitution. The law provides that all political parties and political organisations in Lithuania function freely and independently. State bodies, enterprises, institutions and organisations, as well as public organisations and officials, are prohibited from interfering in the internal affairs of a political party or a political organisation. **[10a]** In February 1999, the Justice Ministry refused, for the seventh time, to register the right-wing Lithuanian National Socialist Unity Alliance. **[9b]**

4.10 The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right through periodic, free and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. The election law provides for a secret ballot in parliamentary elections. Of the 141 parliamentary seats, 71 are elected directly and 70 through proportional representation. Only those parties that receive more than 5% of the total ballots (or 7% for coalitions) are allowed representation in the Parliament. In July 2000 the Seimas passed changes to the election law eliminating the need for second-round voting in single-member constituencies. **[3a][41a]**

E. Police and Security Services

4.11 A unified national police force under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry is responsible for law enforcement. The State Security Department is responsible for internal security and reports to Parliament and the President. **[3]** A particular effort has been made to reform the police, although they continue to face problems in recruiting suitable staff, training them and in keeping well qualified officers in the service. **[8]** Economic pressures resulted in more than 1,200 policemen being made redundant in 1999. **[9]**

4.12 According to Article 5 of the Law on State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania (1991), the State Security Department is obliged to follow the principle of inviolability of human rights and freedoms. Human rights and freedoms may be restricted only in cases established by law. Upon the request of a person, officers of the State Security Department have to ascertain the legal grounds for the restriction of his/her freedoms and rights. **[10a]**

4.13 The Lithuanian Constitution specifically forbids torture and, in 1999, there were no reports of its use. However, police sometimes beat or otherwise physically mistreat detainees. The local press have reported that incidents of police brutality are becoming more common. In many instances, the victims reportedly are reluctant to bring charges against police officers for fear of reprisals. A total of 79 officers were dismissed for illegal or fraudulent activities in the first 6 months of 1998 for a variety of offences, compared with 182 for all 1997. During the first six months of 1999 four police officers were charged with abuse of power and one officer was sentenced. **[3a]** The Ministry of the Interior stated that district police inspectors are the most negligent in the force. To strengthen the integrity of the police, the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of the Interior was given administrative autonomy in May 1997. **[3]**

4.14 In 1997, a parliamentary committee started investigations into the conduct of house searches by the police. This was prompted by a search carried out without a warrant in the home of parliamentary deputy Algirdas Petrusевичius. It was revealed that during the investigation of one specific case, 17 out of 39 searches had been conducted without official permission. **[11a]**

4.15 On the initiative of the Ombudsman, a law on restitution for losses caused by unlawful interrogation, investigation or actions by the Prosecutor's Office and courts of

law was adopted. In addition to restoring the victims' professional and labour rights, the new law also provided for the related loss of property, grants and pensions to be compensated. **[11a]**

4.16 In April 2000 the Lithuanian Constitutional Court met to examine some of the articles of the law on the operational activities of law-enforcing agencies, in particular entrapment. On 8 May, the Constitutional Court ruled that governmental institutions cannot approve regulations that would allow the Special Security or other services to instigate or provoke a person to commit a crime in order to collect evidence, and to later initiate legal proceedings against that person; alternatively, a court may not take into account evidence collected in breach of the law. **9p,13c]**

4.17 In May 1997, the parliament decided that its own deputies might not be subjected to 'phone tapping. This decision raised questions about how widespread tapping of 'phones and other monitoring of suspects actually was in Lithuania and how far it was subject to legal controls. **[11a]**

4.18 Article 8 of the Law on the Police of the Republic of Lithuania provides police officers with the possibility of establishing professional unions and other associations in order to meet their professional, cultural and social needs. Police officers, however, cannot become members of political parties. The same Article prohibits them from going on strike. . The demands of the employees of such services have to be considered by the Government. **[10a]**

4.19 The State Security Department guarantees a person confidentiality of information. Persons who have helped the State Security Department and suffered material loss as a result are subject to compensation of damage by the State. **[10a]**

4.20 **ARAS:** ARAS was established in 1991 to deal with anti-terrorist, hostage release operations and arresting especially dangerous and armed criminals, including those involved in organised crime and hijacking. ARAS also organises the protection of witnesses and victims as well as buildings (in special cases). They assist the criminal police and special investigative service in secret operations and with bomb disposal. **[11c]**

4.21 The Lithuanian State Security Department will, in future, focus on counterintelligence work, Mecys Laurinkus - the Department's Director General - announced in March 2000. **[17j]**

F. Legal Rights/Detention

4.22 Lithuania has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. **[10c]**

4.23 On 1 July 1997 the Government abolished the practice of preventive detention which it viewed as an abuse of human rights. Although the Constitution provides that no persons may be arbitrarily detained or arrested there have been instances of prolonged detention. **[3a]** Under the new Article 10 of the Act amending the Code of Penal Procedure no one can be arrested without a court order or judge's decision. Previously the prosecutor had been able to order arrest. If the judge grants the application, the prosecutor has 48 hours to bring the person concerned before the judge, who questions him before confirming the arrest or revoking it. Under the Code of Penal Procedure no

one may be held in pre-trial detention for more than six months. This period may be extended by the district judge up to a maximum of eighteen months in a particularly complex case. **[10a]**

4.24 In addition, the amended provision of the Code of Penal Procedure specifies the grounds on which a person could be arrested. There had to be reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person in question might flee to avoid investigation and trial or that he might obstruct the course of justice or commit new offences. **[10a]**

4.25 Article 54 of the Law on Courts provides that all citizens have the right to legal protection of all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. **[10a]**

4.26 Article 55 of the Code of Penal Procedure states that upon the request of the suspect, the accused, or a person on trial, the participation of a counsel for the defence is guaranteed by the investigator, the interrogator, the judge or the court. **[10a]** In practice the right to legal counsel is abridged by the shortage of trained advocates who find it difficult to cope with the burgeoning numbers of criminal cases brought before the courts. Outside observers have recommended the establishment of a public defender system to regularise procedures for provision of legal assistance to impoverished persons charged in criminal cases. By law, defence advocates have access to government evidence and may present evidence and witnesses. The courts and law enforcement agencies generally honour routine, written requests for evidence. **[3a]**

4.27 Paragraph 6 of Article 267 of the Code of Penal Procedure provides for the right of the accused to question witnesses, experts, specialist, other persons on trial as well as the plaintiffs and their representatives. **[10a]**

4.28 Article 2 of the Constitution embodies virtually all the rights and freedoms set forth in the international instruments. **[10b]**

G. Prisons

4.29 Prison conditions are generally poor. The main problems include overcrowding and poor maintenance due to limited resources, as well as inactivity and abuse by fellow prisoners. **[3a][14c]**

4.30 Following the restoration of independence, the provisions applicable to places of detention were amended, together with almost 70% of the Articles of the Penitentiary Code, to ensure that prison sentences were served under more humane conditions. In 1996 an act on place of pre-trial detention was adopted. Although in practice, convicted prisoners had already been held separately from prisoners awaiting trial, the new provision made it mandatory to do so. The requirement to separate minors from adults was laid down by Article 18 of the Penitentiary Code and by Article 12 of the Act on pre-trial detention. **[10b]** Article 18 of the Penitentiary Code also established the provisions regarding separate confinement of convicts with regard to age, sex and the gravity of the crime committed. **[10a]** On the initiative of the Ombudsman, the government adopted a decree in 1997 to make sentencing and prison policy more humane. 1997 also saw radical changes to the internal rules of all correctional labour establishments. As a result, inmates could wear their own clothes and were free to telephone their families at their own expense. Inmates were also entitled to have a TV-set, radio, books and newspapers in their own cells and could be granted additional visits for good behaviour. **[13a]** New hygiene laws came into effect in 1999 that require sufficient space for each convict to assure healthy and safe conditions. **[3a]**

4.31 In April 2000, a Law on Amnesty was passed to help overcome problems of under-funding and overcrowding. The Law reduced the number of prisoners and detainees

from 15,000 (in January 2000) to 9,000 in July. As of 30 August, there were 7,045 prisoners, including 251 women and 125 juveniles; there were 1612 detainees, including 68 women and 99 juveniles. Juveniles are held separately from adults. Human rights monitors are permitted to visit prisons **[3a]**

4.32 In September 2000, the Penitentiary department was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice. As a result, the Prisons Department has become a civil institution and prison staff are now demilitarised public servants. **[14c]**

H. The Judicial System

4.33 A new Civil Code has been adopted and will enter into force in July 2001. A new Criminal Code was adopted in September 2000 and will come into force simultaneously with a new Code of Criminal Procedure, which has yet to be approved by Parliament. The main drafting principle has been compliance with the requirements of the European Convention on Basic Human Rights and Freedoms. **[14c][3a]**

4.34 To ensure the protection of the rights recognised by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international instruments, the court system of Lithuania has undergone a process of reform. In addition to local courts, the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, district and administrative courts, and the Court of Appeals are functioning and the institution of the Seimas' Ombudsmen has been established; the limits of their competence and the procedures for filing a complaint have been defined. Every decision made by executive, legislative and judicial bodies may be appealed to a higher court. **[15(c)]**

4.35 The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the judiciary is independent in practice. **[3a]** Article 109 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and Article 1 of the Law on Courts, state that the courts have the exclusive right to administer justice in the Republic of Lithuania. In administering justice, judges and courts are independent. Judges investigating a case can obey only the law. **[10a]**

4.36 Article 117 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 6 of the Law on Courts, Article 16 of the Code of the Penal Procedure and Article 10 of the Code of the Civil Procedure of the Republic of Lithuania provide that all court proceedings are open to the public. Closed court sittings may be held in order to protect the citizen's or the citizen's family's private life, or to prevent the disclosure of state, professional or commercial secrets. Closed court sittings may be held in cases where the criminal act was committed by a person under the age of 16 or in order to ensure the secrecy of adoption. Verdicts and final court decisions are openly announced in all cases. **[10a]**

4.37 Article 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 3 of the Law on Courts and Article 3 of the Penal Code provide that every person has to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to the procedure established by law and until declared guilty by an effective court sentence. **[10a]**

4.38 The Seimas (parliament) appoints and dismisses from office the judges of the Supreme Court in response to representations made by the President of the Republic of Lithuania (based on the recommendation of the Minister of Justice), while judges of district and local courts are appointed and dismissed by the President. The Council of Judges submits recommendations to the President concerning the appointment of judges, as well as their promotion, transfer or dismissal from office. **[3]**

4.39 The Constitutional Court reviews the constitutionality of laws and other legal acts, as well as that of actions by the President and the Government. It consists of nine judges, who are appointed by the Seimas for a single term of nine years; one-third of

the Court's members are replaced every three years. The Constitutional Court's authority to issue the final word on subjects within its jurisdiction is unquestioned; it is the country's ultimate legal authority with no further appeal of its rulings. **[1][3a]**

4.40 The Office of the Prosecutor-General is an autonomous institution of the judiciary, comprising the Prosecutor-General and local and district prosecutors' offices which are subordinate to him. The Prosecutor-General and his deputies are appointed for terms of seven years by the Seimas, while the prosecutors are appointed by the Prosecutor-General. The Office of the Prosecutor-General incorporates the Department for Crime Investigation. **[1]** The Prosecutor General exercises an oversight responsibility through the network of district prosecutors who work with police investigators, employed by the Ministry of the Interior, in preparing the prosecution's evidence for the courts. **[3a]**

4.41 Under the provisions of the Court Reform Law, two new kinds of courts were created. Local district courts are being set up below the present district courts to handle cases at the municipal level, while a new appellate court level is hearing appeals arising from district court decisions, thereby reducing the case load of the overburdened Supreme Court. **[3]**

4.42 An arbitration system for commercial cases was established in 1997 by the Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce, Lithuanian Industrialists' Association, the Association of Lithuanian Banks, and the Association of International Chambers of Commerce. With the abolition of the Economic Court in September 1998, commercial cases will be resolved through arbitration or heard in county or district court. In addition as a result of accession to the Council of Europe in 1993, the Ministry of Justice initiated in 1995 an ongoing process to review Lithuania's laws to bring them into accord with provisions of the European Convention on Basic Human Rights and Freedoms. **[3]**

4.43 The European Commission has expressed concern about the excessive length of court proceedings and consequent backlog of cases due to the lack of qualified judges, as well as organisational problems. In order to cope with these problems, the Lithuanian authorities have taken several measures (outlined below) the effectiveness of which has yet to be tested.

In the 12 month period to November 2000, 77 new judges were appointed. As of July 2000 there were a total of 625 judges, with 67 vacancies still to be filled.

A special training department has been set up within the Ministry of Justice and an independent Training Centre for Lithuanian Judges has been established in order to remedy the problem of inadequate specialist training. There remains a requirement for further specialist training in the highly technical areas covered by the administrative courts, including asylum appeals and bankruptcy cases.

The Law on Courts has been amended to re-organise the work of the court bailiffs and to make them more efficient. This reform also grants bailiffs the status of professional court assistants and allows the Justice Ministry to oversee their activities.

The four-tier judicial system has been set up in order to reduce the workload of the Supreme Court, but organisational changes may have actually lengthened court proceedings. The recent amendments to the Law on Courts have established a special Court Department in the Ministry of Justice. One of the major tasks of this department is to administer the works of the Courts.

The length of court proceedings has created problems, particularly in commercial cases. This has resulted in an inadequate application of the bankruptcy law. In order to speed up the settlement of commercial disputes, arbitration tribunals have been set up and the Commercial Court was abolished as of 1 September 1998. **[14c]**

4.44 A law was passed on 1 November 1997 to provide for Remedies for Damages inflicted by the Unlawful Acts of investigative judicial bodies. **[14b]**

4.45 In 1999, out of 17,477 criminal cases 5,878 remained unresolved and out of 123,966 civil cases 20,468 remained unsolved. **[14c]**

I Right to Compensation

4.46 Article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 64 of the Code of Penal Procedure ("The Obligation of the Inquest Body, Interrogator, Prosecutor and the Court to Authorise the Recovery of Damage Inflicted upon a Person by Unlawful Actions"), and Article 486 of the Civil Code ("The Recovery of Damage Inflicted by Unlawful Actions of Inquest, Interrogation, Prosecutor's Office or Court Officers") stipulate the right of a person to receive compensation for material and moral damage resulting from the violation of his/her constitutional rights and freedoms. **[10a]**

4.47 In the period from 1 January 1993 to 1 October 1995, 14 officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were punished by administrative penalties for unlawful application of Article 137 of the Code of Penal Procedure. **[10a]**

4.48 The Penal Code also provides for the responsibility of officials for abuse of official duties (art. 178), unlawful arrest (art. 185), unlawful detention or bringing to court. **[10a]**

J. The Death Penalty

4.49 In December 1998 the Lithuanian Constitutional court ruled that capital punishment was at odds with its Constitution and on 22 December 1998 it was reported that the Lithuanian parliament had abolished the death penalty, passing amendments to the Criminal Code and replacing capital punishment with life imprisonment for very serious crimes. The parliament also passed a law giving those already sentenced to death, of which there were nine, the chance of life imprisonment. **[17a] [15]** The EU welcomed the abolition of the death penalty, noting that an overwhelming majority of parliamentarians voted in favour. **[16]**

4.50 On 18th January 1999 Lithuania's permanent representative to the Council of Europe signed Protocol No. 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which provides for the abolition of the death penalty. On 9 February 1999 it was reported that Lithuania's Supreme Court had commuted the death sentences of eight persons to life imprisonment. **[17b]** It was ratified on 8 July 1999 and came into force on 1 August 1999. On 9 February 1999 it was reported that Lithuania's Supreme Court had commuted the death sentences of eight persons to life imprisonment. **[17b][44a]**

K. Citizenship

4.51 The Law on Citizenship, adopted in 1991 and amended in October 1995 and July 1997, is inclusive with regard to the country's ethnic minorities. Persons are citizens if they were born within the borders of the Republic of Lithuania; or were born outside the country and one of their parents were citizens or permanent residents of Lithuania; or were citizens or permanent residents of Lithuania prior to June 1940 (their children or grandchildren also qualify under certain circumstances); or became citizens under previous legal authority. **[3, 62]**

4.52 Citizenship by naturalisation requires a 10-year residency, a permanent job or source of income, knowledge of the basic provisions of the Constitution, some proficiency in Lithuanian (94% of applicants passed the language portion of the

citizenship test in the first half of 2000), renunciation of any other citizenship, and an oath of allegiance. [3, 62]

4.53 Under Lithuania's citizenship laws, all residents, regardless of ethnic origin, were eligible to apply for naturalisation; by early 1993 more than 90% of the country's non-ethnic-Lithuanian residents had been granted citizenship. [1]

4.54 With certain exceptions established by law no person may be a citizen of Lithuania and of another state at the same time.[1]

L. Social Welfare

4.55 The health care system adopted in October 1991 covers all residents. In 1997, the system was undergoing a process of reorganisation: previously funded by the state, the financing of health care is to become the responsibility of insurance funds. [1]

4.56 The social insurance scheme covers all residents and entitles them to old age and disability pensions, some unemployment benefits, and benefits in the event of sickness, maternity and widowhood. Finance for the scheme is provided by the independent Social Insurance Fund, and is administered by a central board. The social assistance scheme is administered by local authorities and provides certain family benefits and means-tested social benefits. The 1992 Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to old-age and disability pensions, as well as to social assistance in the event of unemployment, sickness and widowhood, etc. [1] However, a lack of funds has necessitated a review of the social security system. [19]

M. Education

4.57 Under the terms of the 1992 Constitution education, which is free, is compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16. There are three principle levels of education: comprehensive, vocational and schools of further education. Lithuanian is the language of instruction in most schools, but there are over 200 schools where Russian, Polish or Byelorussian - or more than one language - are the medium of instruction.[1][10a][50]
See also 5.42

N. Europe and NATO

4.58 Full membership of the institutions of Western Europe is Lithuania's over-riding foreign policy goal. A formal application for EU membership was lodged on 8 December 1995 following the signature of an Association (Europe) Agreement on 12 June 1995 and a Free Trade Agreement on 18 July 1994. At the European Union summit in Helsinki in December 1999, Lithuania was invited to begin accession negotiations on 28 March 2000. By September 2001, negotiations had already been concluded on 17 of 29 chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. Lithuania joined the Council of Europe in 1993 and became an Associate partner of the WEU in May 1994. [6b][11e][39]

4.59 The Europe Agreement between the European Union and Lithuania entered into force on 1 February 1998 following the completion of the ratification procedures. Lithuanian has implemented the Europe Agreement correctly and contributed to the smooth functioning of the various joint institutions. [21]

4.60 The European Commission's Progress Report of November 2000 stated that Lithuania continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. It also concluded that:

- The reform of the legal system has progressed with the adoption of the Civil and Criminal Codes, but judicial reform needs to be stepped up, particularly with regard to filling judicial vacancies and improving the functioning of courts.

- Significant progress has been made in reforming public administration, including legislation on the functioning of the civil service.
- As regards the fight against corruption, important measures which have already been taken need to be completed.
- Lithuania continues to respect human rights and freedoms, and the situation regarding the protection of minorities continues to be satisfactory. Religious freedom is respected.
- The country has a functioning market economy; macroeconomic stability has been maintained and state interference reduced. The labour market needs to be made more flexible. **[14c]**

4.61 Public support for Lithuania joining the European Union is currently at a high level. In an opinion pole conducted in July 2001, 56% of respondents were in favour of EU membership (up from 34% in September 2000), 21% would vote against joining, and the balance were undecided. **[7g]**

4.62 Lithuania applied to join NATO in January 1994, and is already modifying its armed forces to conform with NATO standards. **[39]** NATO members are due to consider the applications for membership of the three Baltic States and other applicant states at the NATO summit in Prague in 2002. President Adamkus stated in March 2001 that, in the event of Lithuania's entry into NATO, there would be no NATO bases or divisions stationed within the country. Russia is, in principle, opposed to Lithuania joining NATO. **[7d][51a]**

5. HUMAN RIGHTS

A . Actual Practice with regard to Human Rights

5.1 Lithuania continues to respect human rights and freedoms and has acceded to most of the major human rights conventions.**[14a]** In 1994 the Government established the Department of International and Human Rights within the Ministry of Justice, which monitors law and legal practice to determine whether these are in accord with Lithuania's international obligations.**[3]**

5.2 Lithuania is a parliamentary democracy. Those returning after being refused asylum in other countries do not face any Government sanctions.**[11f]**

5.3 In its report of November 2000, of the Commission on Lithuania's Progress towards Accession to the European Union confirmed that Lithuania continues to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. The criteria, as laid down by the Copenhagen European Council in June 1993, stipulate that the country must have achieved "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities. **[14c]**

5.4 After the Constitutional Court ruled that the death penalty was against the Lithuanian Constitution, the Seimas abolished it in December 1998. Lithuania has subsequently ratified the Protocol 6 on the Death Penalty of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It has also signed the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture (specifically forbidden under the Constitution) and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child **[14a]**

5.5 The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has not yet been ratified. Lithuania has not yet signed the initial European Social Charter.**[14a]**

5.6 In December 1998, the Code of Civil Procedure was supplemented by a chapter providing, inter alia, for renewal of a lawsuit if the European Court of Human Rights rules that a decision by a Lithuanian Court contradicts the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms. **[14a]**

5.7 By virtue of the 1991 Act on International Treaties, treaties ratified by Lithuania have force of law. **[3]**

5.8 The Law on Non-Governmental Organisations regulated the operation, registration rights and obligation of NGOs. Article 11 of the Law stipulates that no State institutions or officials, political parties or political organisations, other organisations and persons may interfere with the activity of NGOS. **[10a]**

5.9 Most government authorities cooperate with local non-governmental organisations and actively encourage visits by international and non-governmental human rights groups. **[3]**

5.10 There were no reports of political or other extra-judicial killings in 2000, nor were there any reports of politically motivated disappearances. Economic, social and cultural rights continue to be respected. **[3][3a]**

B. SPECIFIC GROUPS

Women

5.11 Article 29 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability or ethnic background. **[23]** The present labour legislation has no explicit provisions on equal pay for equal work, though the Law on Remuneration for Work prohibits the reduction of remuneration on the grounds of gender. Nevertheless, the principle of equal pay for equal work is envisaged in the International Labour Organisation's Conventions, which have been ratified by Lithuania. **[52]** Generally, men and women receive the same pay for comparable work, but women are underrepresented significantly in some professions and in the managerial sector as a whole. However, significant inequalities in society based on gender continue, and conservative views about the role of women persist. **[3a]**

5.12 There are several articles in the law which are protective to women with children, and to women during pregnancy. For example, anyone refusing to employ a woman because of her pregnancy is liable to prosecution. Women with children under 14 are entitled to a shortened workday or work week upon request, and to choose their periods of annual leave. It is prohibited to assign overtime or night work to women who are pregnant or who have a child under the age of three. **[10b][52]**

5.13 Abuse of women at home is reportedly common, especially in connection with alcohol abuse by husbands, but institutional mechanisms for coping with this problem are now developing. A women's shelter funded in part with Norwegian assistance is now in operation. **[3a]**

5.14 During the first 6 months of 2000, 154 rapes were reported, but only 78 were registered and prosecuted. Persons convicted of rape generally receive sentences of from 3 to 5 years in prison. **[3a]**

5.15 Although the law prohibits trafficking in persons, trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of forced prostitution continued to be a problem in 2000. **[3a] (See 6.55)**

5.16 The Office of the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities was established in April 1999. This Office is an independent public organisation, accountable to the Seimas, and oversees the implementation of the law and investigates complaints concerning

violations of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. The Ombudsman also has some enforcement powers in this regard, and the new Criminal Code envisions criminal sanctions for discrimination or harassment. The Ombudsman has taken the important initiative to specify the sex of victims of violent crimes in the statistical databases of the Ministry of the Interior. **[14c][3a]** Lithuania has signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Woman. **[14c]** See also paragraphs 6.53 and 6.55

Children

5.17 Lithuania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in January 1992.

5.18 The Government provides compulsory, free, and universal primary school education for children through to the age of 15 (or 9th grade), and provides low-cost health care for all children. **[3a]**

5.19 The Ministries of Social Security and Labour and of the Interior share official responsibility for the protection of children's rights and welfare. By the end of April 1999, the Minister of Justice had appointed 85 judges in the district courts for hearings in juvenile criminal cases and cases related to children's rights (adoption and paternity matters). The Office of the Ombudsman for Children, which was approved by parliament in January 2000 and established in November, has taken over many of the functions of the Children's Rights Protection Council. **[3a]**

5.20 Child abuse is reported to be a problem, particularly in connection with alcohol abuse by parents. As of January 2000, the Children's Rights Protection Council identified 36,856 children in abusive and dysfunctional families. The penalties for violence and cruel behaviour against underage persons were made stricter in 1999, providing for imprisonment of one to two years. In addition, the Penal Code provides for terms of up to 3 year's imprisonment for sexual abuse and from 1 to 4 years' for exploiting children in the production of pornography. **[3a]** However, a working group for the protection of children's rights formed at the initiative of President Adamkus reported in July 2001 that violence against children in the home remained a serious problem; there were still many infants and small children being hospitalised for injuries received at the hands of their parents. The President expressed concern that neither prosecutors nor the police were doing enough to deal with this problem, and criticised parliamentarians for a delay in addressing new legislation intended for the protection of children. **[9z]**

People with Disabilities

5.21 The 1991 Law on Integrating Disabled People provides for a broad category of rights and public benefits to which disabled people are legally entitled. Legal provisions for access to buildings for people with disabilities are in place but are not widely enforced. **[3a]**

5.22 In 1999 there were 544,674 adults and 13,276 children with disabilities. The latest data available shows that in 1998 spending for disabled persons was \$166 million (666.58 million litas). A decentralisation of care facilities is under way so as to increase the number of disabled people who can receive services at home. **[3a][14c]**

Religious Freedom/Minorities

5.23 Article 26 of the Constitution stipulates that "every person shall have the right to freely choose any religion or faith and, either individually or with others, in public or

private to manifest his or her religion or faith in worship, observance, practice or teaching" **[10a]** The Constitution provides for religious freedom and the Government generally respects this provision in practice.

5.24 The Law on Religious Communities and Associations was amended in 1999. It grants religious communities, associations and centres property rights to prayer houses, homes and other buildings and permits construction necessary for their activities. Article 5 of this law mentions nine religious communities that have been declared traditional by the law and therefore eligible for governmental assistance. They are Latin Rite Catholics, Greek Rite Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans, Evangelical Reformers, Orthodox, Old Believers, Jews, Sunni Muslims and Karaites. In 1999 the Hasidic Chabad Lubavich community of orthodox Jews was recognised as a traditional religious group and was granted the status of a traditional religious community. **[3a]** There are no restrictions on the activities of other religious communities. **[25] [3b]**

5.25 Most ethnic Lithuanians are Roman Catholics but there are small communities of Calvinists and Lutherans as well as a growing number of modern Protestant denominations, including the Baptists. Adherents of Russian Orthodoxy are almost all ethnic Slavs while most Tatars have retained an adherence to Islam. **[1]** At present there are 23 different religious confessions registered in Lithuania. They unite 1,044 religious groups. **[10a]**

5.26 Article 43 of the Constitution provides that "there shall not be a State religion in Lithuania" and "The State shall recognise traditional Lithuanian churches and religious organisations, as well as other churches and religious organisations, provided that they have a basis in society and their teaching and rituals do not contradict morality or the law" **[10a]**

5.27 In June 2001, Parliament approved an application from the Baptist Union of Lithuania for 'recognised' status. **[12e]**

Main Religions

5.28 The main religions in Lithuania are:-

The Roman Catholic Church of which some 80% of Lithuania's population are adherents.**[1]**

The Byzantine Rite Catholic (Uniate) Church which is under the judicial protection of the Roman Catholic Church of Lithuania.**[1]**

The Russian Orthodox Church which was considered the State religion from 1795-1915 while Lithuania formed part of the Russian Empire.**[1]**

The Lithuanian Old Believers Pomor Church whose followers are comprised of ethnic Russians and number approximately 34,000.**[1]**

The Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church with approximately 30,000 followers.**[1]**

The Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church with a following of approximately 12,000.**[1]**

Islam which is the religion of the ethnic Tatars of Lithuania. At the beginning of 1996 there were five Tatar religious communities.**[1]**

Judaism At the beginning of 1996 there were five Judaic religious communities. In January 1998 there were an estimated 6,000 Jews residing in Lithuania, mostly in Vilnius.**[1]**

5.29 Registered Religions

Roman Catholic (Latin and Greek Rites)

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Evangelical Reformed Church

Russian Orthodox Church
Russian Orthodox Old Believers Church (the Old Ritualists)
Judaism
Sunni Muslims
Karaites
Jehovah's Witnesses
Hassidic Chabad Lubavich Community (Jewish)
Church of Jesus Christ (Visaginas)
Baptists

5.30 **Unregistered**

Full Gospel Evangelical Church (Word of Faith, Word of Truth etc)
Pentecostals
Free Independent Churches
International Krishna's Conscience Organisation
Seventh Day Adventists
Buddhists
Community of Baltic Faith Romuva
Unification Church
Non-denominational Christian Churches
Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints)
Methodists
Yoga Fraternity (Man's Existence Academy)
Romanian Orthodox Community
The Church of Christ **[28]**

5.31 **Tikejimo Zodis** is a religious community which is officially registered in Lithuania. They have a school and the Vilnius Municipality has allocated some money for their needs. It has a mission to attract people but those who dislike participating in their gatherings may leave without persecution. Anyone under the age of 18 wishing to join needs parental consent. **[11h]**

5.32 **Church of Jesus Christ**: This sect is not politically persecuted. It was officially registered in Lithuania in 1994. A large number of its members, mainly Russian speakers from the town of Visaginas, were refused asylum in Sweden in March this year. Their only reason for leaving Lithuania was to accompany their leader, Teimuraz Ejibia, a Georgian citizen, whose Lithuanian residence permit had not been extended. **[5b]**

5.33 **Collegiate Association for the Research of the Principle**: This organisation appears to operate in Lithuania as part of the world movement "The Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon." The Lithuanian Ministry of Justice has refused to register it because its bylaws do not express any religious aims. **[9r]**

Ethnic Minorities

5.34 Ethnic minority groups including Russians, Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Tatars and Karaites make up roughly 20% of the country's citizens.

5.35 The Report on Lithuania's Progress towards EU Accession for 2000 confirmed that 'Lithuania continues to respect human rights and freedoms', and that 'the situation concerning the protection of minorities continues to be satisfactory'. **[14c]** On 23 March 2000 Lithuania ratified the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities. It entered into force on 1 June 2000. **[44b]**

5.36 The rights of freedom of persons who belong to ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities are provided for by the Law on National Minorities of the Republic of Lithuania. Lithuania guarantees all ethnic minorities residing in Lithuania the right to develop freely and respects every minority and language. Any discrimination with regard to race, ethnicity or nationality, language or anything else related to ethnicity is prohibited and punishable by law. **[10a]**

5.37 The Law on National Minorities provides for the following: to obtain aid from the State to develop minority culture and education; the right to schooling in one's native language; to have the press and other information services in one's own language; to form ethnic cultural organisations; to establish contacts with persons of the same ethnic background abroad. The Law provides that historical and cultural monuments of ethnic minorities have to be considered part of the cultural heritage of Lithuania and are under the protection to the State. **[10a]**

5.38 Under Lithuanian law any force directed towards the refusal of one's ethnicity is prohibited. On the other hand, no one can be forced to prove his ethnicity. Every citizen, upon obtaining a passport is free to identify his national origin on the basis of his parents or one of his parents or to ask the authorities not to insert a "nationality" seal into his/her passport. **[10a]**

5.39 An analysis of the legal acts functioning in Lithuania has shown that there are more than 100 laws and legal acts protecting the rights of national, linguistic and religious minorities. **[10a]**

5.40 At present nineteen different nationalities residing in the territory of Lithuania have their own non-governmental organisations, the total number of which exceeds 200. In 1999 there were 56 Russian and 46 Polish NGOs. **[10a][50]**

5.41 The Department of Regional Problems and National Minorities is responsible for upholding the interests of minorities and safeguarding their identities. **[10a]**

5.42 In the academic year 1999-2000, there were 222 schools of general education in which the language of instruction was other than Lithuanian. These schools were attended by 66,073 pupils. **[50]**

<u>Language of instruction</u>	<u>Schools</u>
Total	2260
Lithuanian	2038
Russian	69
Polish	73
Byelorussian	1
Lithuanian and Russian	29
Lithuanian and Polish	11
Russian and Polish	28
Lithuanian, Russian, Polish	10
Russian and Byelorussian	1

5.43 Many non-ethnic Lithuanian public sector employees were required to attain a functional knowledge of Lithuanian within several years, although the authorities have been granting liberal extensions of time frame in which this competence may be achieved. The authorities have said that no one would be dismissed solely because of an inability to meet the language requirements. **[3a]**

Jews

5.44 The first Jewish community appeared in Lithuania in the 15th century. Before World War II approximately 150,000 Jews lived in Lithuania, 90% of whom were murdered during the German occupation. **[1] [29]** At the beginning of 1999 the Jewish population

of Lithuania numbered about 9,600. There are 17 Jewish organisations in Lithuania whose principal concerns are Jewish education.[38]

5.45 A certain level of anti-Semitic sentiment persists in the country, reflected in sporadic public incidents and sensationalist exploitation of anti-Semitism for commercial gain. In November 2000 the Prosecutor General launched an official criminal investigation into anti-Semitic articles published on 18 October in the national daily newspaper Lietuvos Aidas. The President, Prime Minister and journalists' union publicly condemned the articles. [3a]

5.46 In April 2000 President Adamkus stated that Lithuania will not tolerate anti-Semitism or hatred of other cultures and differently thinking people . [7b]

5.47 A new Holocaust and Jewish Culture Centre was opened in Vilnius in March 2000 with " the aim of helping Lithuanians to get rid of stereotypes of national minorities and offer information about the large and distinct pre-war Jewish community, its contribution to the declaration of Lithuania's independence in 1918 and to the country's culture and economy as well as the tragedy which befell the Jewish people". [9s]

5.48 The Penal Code provides for a sentence of imprisonment from 2 to 10 years for incitement of racial or national hatred. [3a]

5.49 The ultra-nationalist organisations, Populist Movement (Tautininkai) and Young Lithuania (Jauna Lietuva) remained on the fringe of society in 1998. Their newspapers Lithuanian Morning and the Republic, once very anti-Semitic, appeared to have moderated their position. The United National Socialist League (SNEL) and the Lithuanian Freedom League are anti-Semitic and are banned.[38]

5.50 Although an initiative was announced in May 1998 to form an international commission for research into crimes against humanity perpetrated in Lithuania from 1939-91, it had not received funding, staff or an action plan by the end of 1998.[3] The Social Democratic Party has called for amendments to the laws impeding the conviction of people accused of genocide against Jews. [9d]

5.51 Prime Minister Brazauskas assured the head of the World Jewish Restitution Organisation in August 2001 that the government would seek to amend legislation in order to facilitate the return of Jewish property confiscated during the Nazi and Soviet occupations. [6g]

Poles

5.52 The Polish minority numbers about 261,000 (7%) of the population. Initially tense relations between the Poles and the authorities improved considerably after the election in February 1993 of two district councils that had been suspended immediately after the August 1991 coup attempt. Members of the councils, which represented predominantly Polish constituencies, had been charged with supporting Soviet rule during Lithuania's independence struggle and supporting the Moscow putsch.[29]

5.53 Poles have ready access to primary secondary and higher education in the Polish language. There is TV and radio programming in Polish, as well as seven Polish language periodicals.[29][50]

5.54 A joint Polish-Lithuanian Commission met in Warsaw in June 1999 to discuss the problems of the Polish community in Lithuania and of the Lithuanian minority in Poland.[27] Although there are periodic complaints about discrimination from elements in the Polish community, the Polish Government has not sought to become involved.[11]

5.55 The Lithuanian authorities have promised that the mandatory school - leaving examination in the Polish language will be restored in Polish language schools in

Lithuania and that the re-organisation of the school network will be decided by local government. **[45]**

5.56 A court decision in August 1999 to double the sentences of five pro-Soviet activists who attempted to establish so-called Polish autonomy in Lithuania's Salcininkai district in 1990 was said to have put a temporary strain on Polish/Lithuanian relations. **[12c]**

Russians

5.57 The Russian minority constitutes about 9.4% of the population (344,000 people) and can be divided into three groups: those whose ancestors settled in Lithuania between the 16th and early 20th centuries; those who settled there between the two world wars as immigrants from the Soviet Union and those who moved to Lithuania after the Second World War as civilians or members of the Soviet military /police apparatus. **[29][50]**

5.58 Initially tense relations between the Lithuanian authorities and the Russian minority have improved considerably since 1991. **[29]**

5.59 The overwhelming majority of ethnic Russians have chosen Lithuanian citizenship but a few have opted for Russian citizenship or decided to remain in Lithuania as stateless persons. **[10b]**

5.60 The Russian minority have access to primary, secondary and tertiary education in their own language. State radio and television broadcast a fair selection of programmes in Russian and Lithuanian television regularly rebroadcasts programmes from Russia. More than a dozen periodicals are published in Russian. **[29] [10b]**

5.61 Russia has cited Lithuania's treatment of its Russian minority as an example which other Baltic states should follow. **[11i]** Oleg Mironov, the Russian Human Rights Commissioner (Ombudsman), was reported to have praised Lithuanian human rights efforts during a visit to Vilnius in September 2001, stating that the activity of Lithuanian human rights institutions corresponded to international standards. **[17n]**

5.62 Lithuanian Russian participate in politics through political parties and organisations such as the Union of Russian Lithuanians, a political party founded in 1995, and the Citizens Alliance, a political organisation dating from 1996. Since independence, ethnic Russians have sat in the Lithuanian parliament and on municipal councils. **[10b]**

5.63 Various Russian religious communities also played an important role in Lithuania's cultural and spiritual life. In 1995 there were 58 groups of Old Believers and 41 Orthodox groups. Since the war there has been a Russian old Believers monastery and convent at Vilnius. **[10b]**

Roma

5.64 Roma first arrived in Lithuania in the 15th century and there are estimated to be approximately 3-4000 Roma in the country. There is nothing to indicate that they experience any particular problems. **[30]** In June 2000 the government adopted the National Programme for the Integration of the Roma Minority. **[14c]**

Refugees

5.65 Lithuania is making efforts to comply with international standards on asylum seekers protection. The Lithuanian Government co-operates with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organisations in assisting refugees. In 1998, 1999 and 2000 there were no reports of forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. **[3][3a]**

5.66 In July 1991 the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol, as well as the National Refugee Law, entered into force and asylum procedure became operational.

[13a]

5.67 The 1997 Law on Refugee Status allows for the formal grant of refugee status to qualified applicants. The 1998 Law on Legal State of Aliens came into effect in July 1999. **[3a]** With the enforcement of the Aliens Law on 1 July 1999 asylum seekers, rejected as refugees but in need of international protection, were able to apply for temporary stay permits on humanitarian grounds. **[18][20]** The process of granting asylum has already started. An asylum seeker whose application is rejected can appeal to the Council for Refugees Affairs and, finally, the Court. **[14b]**

5.68 Lithuania has now concluded agreements on readmission with the following countries: Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine. The conclusion of the readmission agreement with Ukraine (which came into force on 29 March 1997) was quite important as a number of persons detained in Lithuania came directly from there. Lithuania is expected to conclude corresponding agreements with Belarus, Russia, Poland and Germany. Taking into consideration the fact that most of their illegal immigrants come from Belarus and Russia, the lack of readmission agreements with these transit countries seriously impairs dealing with detained aliens. It was expected that respective agreements with Russia and Belarus would be concluded in 1998. **[10c]**

5.69 On 13 February 1998, Lithuania signed a co-operation treaty with the International Migration Organisation under which it is developing a project to improve management of legal and illegal immigration. The mounting number of readmission agreements, the introduction of new identity cards and the adoption of an amendment to the Penal Code bringing in stiffer sanctions for trafficking in human beings should all help master migrant flows. **[14b]**

5.70 Aliens who wish to apply for refugee status submit their application in writing or orally, either to the border post or to a police station in Lithuania. When it has been established, in conformity with Article 4 of the Act of 4 July 1995 on the status of refugees, that there are no grounds for refusing asylum, the alien is granted temporary territorial asylum. Asylum seekers may be accompanied by members of their family (their spouse and children under 18) and all of them are entitled to State assistance and public services. Under the Act, the freedom of movement of aliens granted temporary refugee status could be limited. Refugees granted temporary status were housed at the refugee centre, which they could leave to travel within Lithuania for a maximum period of 72 hours. If they left the centre for over 72 hours without sufficient reason, the processing of their application for refugee status could be terminated. **[10b]**

5.71 There is an open reception centre for asylum seekers in the town of Rukla, where 56 persons were registered in August 2000, and a detention centre for migrants (the Foreigners' Registration Centre) in the town of Pabrade, where 30 illegal immigrants were registered that month. Living conditions in Rukla are described as modern, safe and healthy. The centre in Pabrade was previously overcrowded and rundown, but a major upgrade was completed in January 2000, financed by the European Union PHARE programme. **[3a][14c][13c]**

5.72 A new Refugee Law was adopted by Parliament on 29 June 2000 and entered into force on 1 September. It eliminated many of the deficiencies of the previous law; for example, it no longer provides for a pre-screening procedure and the automatic detention of asylum seekers. Individuals can only be detained on the basis of a court decision and for certain reasons, such as to prevent escape pending deportation and to allow for the examination of documents suspected to be forged. The Law also provides

the right of family reunification for those granted refugee status and the right of children to education. It also allows for an accelerated procedure in respect of asylum claims determined to be 'manifestly unfounded'. **[13c]**

5.73 Representatives of the UN and the Interior Ministry signed an agreement in June 2001 to fund and provide full interpreter and translator services for asylum applicants. **[61a]**

Homosexuals and Transsexuals

5.74 The rights of homosexuals as well as other sexual minorities in Lithuania are not restricted.

5.75 According to Law No 1-180 of 10 June 1995, an amendment was made in the Criminal Code abolishing penal responsibility for sexual activity between two men on the condition that no violence, menace or usage of one's higher position or helplessness was used to achieve the purpose and this was not done to a child. Prior to March 1994 such acts had been punishable under Article 119 of the Criminal Code **[31]**

5.76 The Ministry of Justice registered the Lithuanian Gay League and Sappho, the Lesbian League, in 1995 and the Movement for Sexual Freedom in 1996. **[31]**

5.77 The legal age of consent for male-male sex is 18, but 16 for male-female and female-female sex. **[53]**

5.78 There are no laws about transsexuals in Lithuania. It is not illegal for a man to dress as a woman but there is the possibility of negative public reaction. **[11j]** A television show is transmitted where transsexuals are able to speak of the problems they face. **[11j]**

5.79 Gender reassignment is in theory available in Lithuania but there is no information that any operations have been performed. **[11j]**

C. HUMAN RIGHTS: OTHER ISSUES

Freedom of Speech and the Press

6.1 The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press. The government respects these rights in practice. **[3a]**

6.2 Freedom of the Press is extremely important to Lithuania and in June 1996 a Public Information Law was promulgated, regulating all aspects of information gathering and dissemination as well as the rights and responsibilities of journalists and the owners of the media. Public servants who attempted to impede the dissemination of information or who refused to provide information to the media could be held liable for their act. Any act or decision by State organs that hindered or restricted freedom of information could be appealed. **[10b]**

6.3 In October 1996 parliament voted an act governing the organisation and management of the national radio and television network. **[10b]** Prior restraint over either print or broadcast media on disclosure is prohibited unless the Government determines that national security is involved. **[3a]**

6.4 Under the new media law, the media are to create special ethics commission and an ombudsman was established to check libel cases and other complaints. **[3a]**

6.5 Proposals to amend the 1996 Law on the Provision of Information to the Public has met with opposition from media moguls who fear that changes will introduce censorship. **[12b]** The Lithuanian Journalists Union has also urged parliament to annul

the existing amendment of the Criminal Code which stipulates imprisonment for illegal use of official secrets. [37a]

6.6 In July 2000 parliament approved new wording for the mass media law to conform with EU standards. However, President Adamkus has returned it to Parliament for further deliberation. [9u]

6.7 Journalists covering organised crime continue to receive threats to their safety and welfare. [3]

6.8 There are no restrictions on academic freedom. [3a]

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

6.9 The Constitution provides for these rights and the Government respects them in practice

6.10 Strikes are forbidden in areas of natural disaster as well as in regions under a state of emergency. They are also forbidden by Resolution 555 of the Government of the Republic Of Lithuania on Safeguarding the Normal Rhythm of Work at Energy, Communications and Transport Enterprises, Institutions and Organisations. [10c]

6.11 The Communist party of Lithuania and other organisations associated with the Soviet regime continue to be banned. [3a]

Political Organisations

6.12 All parties and movements in Lithuania have to register with the Ministry of Justice. Before registering they have to present a statute describing their activities. These activities must not contradict the Lithuanian Constitution or legal system.

6.13 A new political party, the Lithuanian National Democratic Party, was founded in November 1999, becoming the 35th registered political organisation in Lithuania. [6f]

6.14 The main political organisations are listed at Annex A. The following are notes on some organisations not listed in Annex A, but about which CIPU has, in the past, received requests for information; some of these are unregistered:

The Communist Party:

6.15 Under Soviet (communist) rule some 150,000 Lithuanians were deported and the leaders and members of the Roman Catholic Church were persecuted and imprisoned. Lithuanian political parties were disbanded, and political power became the exclusive preserve of the Communist Party of Lithuania (CPL), the local branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). [1]

6.16 In the late 1980's the independence movement gathered momentum and by 1989 the CPL had begun to adopt a more radical position in an attempt to retain a measure of popular support. [1]

6.17 In December 1989, the CPL declared itself an independent party, no longer subordinate to the CPSU. Shortly afterwards, a group of CPL members who were opposed to independence formed a separate movement, the pro-Soviet LCP (Lithuanian Communist Party), which was later involved in the 1991 attempted coup when Soviet tanks killed 14 unarmed civilians [1] [11a]

(see also Annex D, "Chronology of Key Events" and Section III, "Recent Political History").

6.18 On 13 January 1991 the LCP, as a branch of the CPSU, organised and initiated a coup designed to overturn the Lithuanian Government, and by force destroy the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Lithuania. On 19 August the LCP attempted to carry out the instructions of the Moscow coup plotters.

[11a] By doing this the LCP (CPSU) acted against the Constitution and laws of Lithuania and against international norms. In August 1991, as the Soviet coup collapsed, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania banned the LCP after deciding: "to admit that the illegal activity of the LCP (CPSU) continues and therefore to ban activity of the LCP (CPSU) in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania". **[11a]**

6.19 The successor party to the CPL, the LDLP (Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party), which was founded in 1990 and many of whose members used to belong to the Communist Party, was not banned and went on to form the government after the first post-independence general election. Some of the LDLP's current political opponents (such as the ruling Conservative Party) still tend privately to label them as Communist.

[1] [11a]

6.20 However, it should be noted that the Communist Party, although not officially registered, certainly exists. It is engaged in underground activity that is considered illegal. Although it is banned, the law of the Republic of Lithuania does not provide for any penalties for those who become members and the Ministry of Justice has no data of any persons being sentenced or fined for simply being a member. **[11b)][[11n]**

6.21 In August 1999 a court found six persons guilty of complicity in the January 1991 coup attempt. They were sentenced to terms of imprisonment from 3 – 12 years for crimes including pre-meditated murder and serious bodily harm. Their appeals are still to be heard. **[3]**

6.22 **Armija Krajova:** The Ministry of Justice has denied the registration of Armija Krajova, an anti-Nazi veterans association, on the grounds that it had also taken part in exterminating Lithuanian civilians during World War II **[13]**

6.23 **Unity Party:** This social movement was organised and registered in Vilnius in 1989. It was legal until 11 March 1990. The leader, Mr Ivanov, a Russian citizen, was jailed for criminal offences. However, he is now free and not persecuted. No one would be arrested for just being a member of this movement. **[11c]**

6.24 **Ukio Party:** This is an officially registered party which functions in accordance with the Law on Political Parties and the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. The party participated in the Elections in 1996 but did not get any seats in the Parliament (Seimas). It has 5 seats in local municipalities. **[11d]**

6.25 **Yedinstvo:** This is a pro-Soviet (not pro-Russian) organisation that functioned in pre-independence years. It took active part in the massacre of 13 January 1991 when eleven people were killed in Vilnius while defending the TV tower from Soviet tanks. Yedinstvo is considered to be a criminal organisation. **[11d]**

6.26 **National Socialist Party of Lithuania:** Otherwise known as the National Socialist Unity Alliance of Lithuania or the Lithuanian National Socialist Solidarity Union, this illegal extreme right-wing party was refused registration for the tenth time by the Ministry of Justice in July 2000. The Ministry found that the Party's views contained in its manifesto and statute on the supremacy of the Lithuanian nation and the ethnic inequality and discord expressed in them, violated specific provisions of the Lithuanian law on political parties. Nevertheless, the party managed to register three candidates for the October General Election. The Lithuanian National Labour Union, an NGO registered with the Siauliai municipality, is allied to the National Socialist Party.

[9n][9w][17m]

Health Care

6.27 The Republic of Lithuania inherited a model of health care provision typical of the former USSR; it was over-centralised, and had little provision for patient choice or respect for patients' rights. However, several reforms were introduced during the 1990s to modernise health-care delivery and address issues of equity, consumer choice and quality of care. The number of physicians and hospital beds per-thousand-population in Lithuania is higher than the average for EU states. **[57]**

6.28 The Health Insurance Law of 1996, phased in between January and July 1997, established a statutory health insurance system based on contributions deducted from the monthly income of all residents of Lithuania. The State covers the contributions of non-tax-paying residents in 14 categories, including the unemployed, pensioners, pregnant women, children under 18, the disabled, etc. People who fail to pay contributions are entitled to free medical treatment only in emergencies. **[57,59a]**

6.28 The 1996 Law on Mental Health Care sets out the rights of psychiatric patients. Mentally ill persons have full political, economic, social and cultural rights; discrimination on the grounds of mental illness, or a history of mental illness, is unlawful. A mentally ill person may only be declared incompetent by a court of law. The State has an obligation to care for the mentally ill, and patients have a legal right to receive appropriate, accessible and suitable care - including the right, except in specified circumstances, to choose a psychiatrist, care facility, and the scope of the treatment, or to refuse treatment. **[56]**

Workers' Rights

6.29 The Constitution and the 1991 Law on Trade Unions recognised the right of workers and employees to form and join trade unions. The Law on Trade Unions formally extends this right to the police and armed forces but the Collective Agreements Law of 1991 does not allow collective bargaining by government employees involved in law enforcement and security work. The Law also provides for the right to strike although public officials providing essential services may not do so. Only 10% of enterprises have trade unions.**[3]**

6.30 Lithuania first became a member of the International Labour Organisation in 1921. After re-establishment of independence in 1990, it renewed its membership in 1991.**[10c]**

6.31 The Constitution prohibits forced labour by all, including children and this prohibition is observed in practice. Labour performed by convicts is regulated by the provisions of Chapter 8 of the Penitentiary Code which defines working conditions, compensation for work, salary deductions as well as the right to disability pensions for persons disabled during the execution of criminal penalties.**[10a]**

6.32 The legal minimum wage has been \$107.50 (430 litas) per month since December 1999. This apparently does not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The average wage in July 2000 was \$275 (1,100 litas) per month. **[3a]** Every three months the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Social Security submit their minimum wage proposals to the Seimas. Enforcement of the minimum wage is apparently almost non-existent, in part because the government does not want to increase unemployment. The 40 hour work week is standard with provision for at least one 24 hour rest period. For a majority of the population, living standards remain low.**[3a]**

6.33 In October 2000 the Seimas passed amendments to the Law on Safety at Work. The law now complies with European Union directives and outlines clear responsibility

of the employer for the safety and health of employees at work. The 1993 Labor Safety Law sets out the rights of workers facing hazardous conditions and provides legal protection for workers who file complaints about such conditions. Workers may remove themselves from hazardous job conditions without fear of losing their jobs. **[3a]**

6.34 According to the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Annual Report 1998, violations of trade union rights were associated with several problems: the inadequate legislation concerning trade unions which was in violation of both the Lithuanian Constitution and ILO Conventions as well as other international labour standards; decisions of the government, lower authorities and employers' organisations; and reluctance of employers to abide by the law or their failure to undertake required measures. **[13b]**

6.35 The International Helsinki Federation reported that the government tended to prepare legislation regarding labour laws without consulting trade unions. **[13b]**

6.36 The European Commission however concluded in their report on Lithuania's progress towards meeting the criteria for joining the EU, in November 1998 and October 1999, that trade unions are becoming more active and beginning to have an influence on public policy development. **[8b][14a]** About 10 to 15 per cent of workers are registered trade union members. **[3a]**

Freedom of Movement within the Country and Travel

6.37 Article 32 of the Constitution provides for the right of persons to move freely, to choose their place of residence and to leave Lithuania at their own will. The right may not be restricted except as provided by law and if it is necessary for the protection of State security or the health of the people for to administer justice. **[10a][3a]**

Nevertheless, in contradiction, the law on emigration required persons leaving Lithuania to obtain the permission of the Ministry of Justice. This law was abrogated in March 2000. **[9i]**

6.38 A citizen may not be prevented from returning to Lithuania and every Lithuanian may settle in Lithuania. **[10a]**

Military Service

6.39 Military service is compulsory in Lithuania and normally lasts for 12 months. **[1]** There is however a long list of exemptions/postponements for those such as students, doctors, sick people, sick parents, etc. **[11k]**

6.40 Alternative service is available to conscientious objectors under the Law on Alternative Labour Service of October 1990, in terms of which citizens who are unable, on the basis of their beliefs, to serve in the military may instead be employed to work in municipalities, health care, or other public institutions. The period of alternative service is 24 months, but 12 months in the case of those who have graduated from schools or higher education. **[48]** A separate commission was formed in February 2000 to decide applications for alternative service. **[9k]**

6.41 Deliberate evasion of military service (or alternative service) would involve a lengthy process of up to two years culminating in a fine being imposed. If this fine were not paid, the offender could face up to two years in prison. **[11k]**

6.42 Human rights violations committed by non-commissioned military personnel have declined. During the first 6 months of 1999, 6 criminal cases were brought against conscripts and officers compared to 34 in the previous year. The Ministry of Defence believes that a lack of professionalism among non-commissioned officers, rather than

ethnic, regional or social factors is the primary factor in cases of hazing and it is working actively to improve the skills and judgements of such officers. A new disciplinary statute, approved in May 1999, provides procedures for investigation of disciplinary offences, assures the right to appeal and list the types of punishment. **[3][3a]**

6.43 **SKAT** is a legitimate organisation which forms part of the Lithuanian national defence forces under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Defence and equivalent to the National Guard. It was officially recognised in 1991 by law of the Supreme Court and re-organised in 1993 into more or less its present day form. **[11I]**

6.44 **DOSA AF** is the Russian acronym for SDAALR which means the Voluntary Society in support of the Army, Airforce and Navy. Membership of this organisation, or legally buying guns from it, would not merit arrest in Lithuania. **[11m]**

Rehabilitation and Genocide Trials

6.45 Government rehabilitation of over 50,000 persons charged with anti-Soviet crimes during the Stalin era led to reports in 1991 that some people alleged to have been involved in crimes against humanity during the Nazi occupation had benefited from this rehabilitation. A special judicial procedure was established to examine each case in which an individual or organisation had raised an objection that a rehabilitated persons might have committed a crime against humanity. In the first such cases since 1994, the Supreme Court overturned the rehabilitation of 22 persons during 1998. **[3]** In September 1998 the International Commission to Investigate the Crimes of Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania was established and began work three months later. **[3a]**

6.46 The Simon Wiesenthal Centre has urged Lithuania to ensure that Lithuania Nazi war criminals who return to Lithuania are prosecuted for their crimes committed during World War II. **[9g]** Despite this, prosecutions are likely to prove difficult because of the age and infirmity of some of the accused as well as the lapse of time since the alleged acts were committed. **[36]**

6.47 In February 2000 the Seimas passed a law allowing, under certain specified conditions, for the trial *in absentia* of persons charged with genocide or war crimes. **[14c]** On 5 April 2001 the Siauliai Regional Court sentenced former NKVD (predecessor to the KGB) officer Petras Raslanas *in absentia* to life imprisonment for genocide, specifically the murder of 76 Lithuanian civilians in the village of Rainiai. Raslanas is currently living in Russia. **[17I]**

6.48 The Lithuanian government sought the extradition of an 85 year old suspected war criminal, Anton Gecas (Antanas Gecevicus), who had been living in Scotland since 1947. In February 2001 a Lithuanian court issued a warrant for the arrest of Gecas, who was alleged to have participated in the murder of civilians, mostly Jews, while serving in an auxiliary police battalion during the Nazi occupation. On 4 September the Scottish Executive announced a decision not to extradite Gecas, on the grounds of his ill health. Gecas died on 12 September 2001. **[54,58a]**

6.49 On 15 February 2001, the Vilnius Regional Court found 93 year old Kazys Gimzauskas guilty of perpetrating genocide of Jews during WWII, but waived punishment because the criminal has an incurable illness. **[17k]**

Lustration Law

6.50 In November 1999 the Lithuanian Parliament passes a law under which Lithuanian residents who had secretly co-operated with the KGB were invited to register with the State Security Department. In return, citizens who registered would be free from the pressures of their past and all information given, including the names of collaborators, would remain confidential. Those who failed to register by the closing date of 5 August 2000 would not be protected and their Cupertino with the KGB could be made public. People whose co-operation is made public could be banned from holding public office and from a number of other positions. It was announced on 10 August that 1500 Lithuanian citizens had had registered under the Lustration Law. **[15b][46]**

Organised Crime and Witness Protection

6.51 The crime rate growth in Lithuania has been influenced by the lack of adequate legal, social control and prevention systems as well as by economic factors. Timely measure were not taken to prevent the "non-traditional" organised crime such as extortion of property, forgery and money laundering, smuggling, drug and prostitution business and similar offences. Deficient legislation regulating business and financial activities along with gaps in taxation and tax administration system provided opportunities for the expansion of economic offences.**[34]**

6.52 In November 1997 the Government approved the Lithuanian Police Reform Guidelines. In order to grant a wider range of rights and responsibility to the territorial police stations, the structure of the Police Department as a managing institution was improved by clearly defining and managing operational functions. Officers of the internal affairs system are committed to putting in every effort to making life in Lithuania peaceful and safe.**[34]** The Law on the Prevention of Organised Crime, passed in July 1997, allowed for the application of preventive measures on a person who, by his actions, might restrict the rights and freedoms of other persons, create conditions for the emergence and development of social and economic preconditions or organised crime or pose a threat to public security.**[3a]**

6.53 The number of missing persons registered in the Lithuania Ministry of Interior has increased over the past 5 years. Most of the missing persons are young under age girls, many of whom have been recruited by criminal organisations to allegedly work as waitresses or nurses. It is feared that many have been forced to work as prostitutes or in other humiliating businesses with their passports or other identity documents seized by the dealers who threaten them with violence if they do not obey. Another group of missing persons are young men who have gone abroad on business matters and disappeared, probably after becoming involved with organised crime and other problems.**[13b]**

6.54 Money laundering remains a problem for Lithuania which is a transit country for narcotics trafficking and smuggling and for the transfer of funds of questionable origin. Lithuania has made significant progress in its legislative efforts to develop an anti-money laundering legislation in 1997. The legislation establishes a suspicious transaction reporting system that includes the automatic reporting of transactions or a series of related transactions exceeding \$12,500. The legislation also provides for the establishment of a financial intelligence unit, the Money Laundering Prevention Division.**[3c]**

6.55 The law prohibits trafficking in persons and provides for criminal liability for persons who engage in trafficking in persons for sexual abuse. However, the country is reported to be a source, transit point, and destination for trafficking in women. A number of

women, some underage, have been enticed or forced into prostitution and sold abroad by organised crime groups. Many are lured by deceptive offers of seemingly innocent jobs such as household helpers, bar dancers, or waitresses. Women also are tricked into prostitution through false marriage advertisements. Their families often are unaware of their predicament and believe that they have disappeared or been kidnapped. However, it is difficult to determine what percentage were enticed or coerced and how many departed voluntarily. Of those recently returned to Lithuania as deportees, 70 percent reportedly said that they knew what type of work they were going to undertake. Some NGOs consider government efforts to prevent trafficking in persons and search for missing persons unsatisfactory. The border police have been instructed to pay more attention to young persons, particularly females, travelling abroad. Since January 2000, statistics on deported persons are being collected. During the first half 2000, 1,618 persons were deported back to Lithuania. Most of them worked or attempted to work illegally, stayed illegally in other countries, or were turned back at the border. The absolute majority of them are citizens of Lithuania. There are no specific government assistance programs for victims of trafficking; however, the police offer protection for witnesses. **[3a]**

6.56 Lithuania became a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention in 1998. It has been working with European and US Government institutions to improve border security and prevent smuggling. Specific joint operations have been conducted with Moscow and Kalingrad region police as well as customs officials in Germany. **[3c]**

6.57 Lithuanian authorities have identified 74 organised groups involved in illegal narcotics activity. Amphetamine factories in Poland produce products that are smuggled through Lithuania into Scandinavia. As a result, the Government has determined that the control of the border area is critical to stopping the flow of illegal narcotics and counter-narcotics officers are currently assigned to the border regions. **[3c]**

6.58 The Lithuanian Government continues to work with a variety of European and US institutions to strengthen law enforcement bodies and drug control programmes in an effort to improve border security and anti-smuggling efforts. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed a tri-partite co-operation agreement in November 1998 aimed at combating internal and international crime and illegal immigration in the Baltic States **[3c][6c]**

6.59 The law to fight organised crime, passed in July 1997, stipulated that chief police officers or their deputies were entitled to place under "preventive-operative" surveillance for between 6 months and 2 years a person who was suspected of being involved in organised crime and had been officially warned to stop such activities. A police officer assigned to take operative actions could require that person to report to the police on a regular basis for clarification, to require the person to indicate the source of income, to make enquiries of his employer about the person and to oblige him to inform the police of any changes to his place of residence or regarding specific activities. **[13a]**

6.60 In 1999 the overall crime rate decreased by 1.3% compared to 1998. However drugs-related crimes have gone up by 12.3% and cases of rape and attempted rape have increased by 35.5%. An outbreak of violence in Panevezys prompted the President to call for a ruthless crackdown on the gangsters. Crimes there against teenage girls in which they were intimidated into sexual slavery had "gone beyond the pale" The chief prosecutor of the organised crime and corruption investigation department of the Panevezys Prosecutor's Office was assassinated in January 1999. His assassination was seen as a challenge to law and order in the country. **[6d]**

6.61 A set of new measures to strengthen the fight against the most dangerous criminal gangs and ways of improving the co-ordination of activities among law and order institutions was introduced and a joint decree authorising the establishment of interrogation task forces in all Lithuanian towns was signed. **[17c]**

6.62 On 17 March 2000, the Interior ministers of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed an agreement on the protection of witnesses and victims of crime. The agreement allows for cross-border protection of witnesses and victims, either for a limited period of time or permanently. The individual's property and legal interests are protected and all housing, medical and other re-settlement costs are covered by the country of origin. This arrangement is unique in Europe. **[49][9y]**

6.63 The Lithuanian State Border Protection Service announced in May 2001 that it had uncovered an organised group involved in smuggling illegal migrants across the country, and had arrested the group's main organisers. In 1996, a total of 1,551 illegal immigrants were detained at the Lithuanian border. In 1997 the number was 1,382, in 1998 just 495, in 1999 the figure was 261; and in 2000, only 100 illegal migrants were detained. **[9ab]**

Paramilitary Groups

6.64 Juodvarniai (Black Ravens)

This is a secret armed organisation, suspected of terrorist plans and paramilitary connections. **[9v][6e]**

Country Information and Policy Unit
Immigration & Nationality Directorate
21 September 2001

ANNEX A

POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS:

1. Parties, coalitions and political organisations which nominated candidates for the October 2000 General Election:

No. of the List issued by CEC	Title
1.	Lithuanian National Union
2.	Lithuanian Peasants' Party
3.	Lithuanian Centre Union
4.	Lithuanian Freedom Union
5.	Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party
6.	Homeland Union - Lithuanian Conservatives
7.	The New Union (Social Liberals)
8.	Lithuanian Liberal Union
9.	A. Brazauskas Social Democratic Coalition
10.	The Lithuanian "Social Democracy 2000" Party
11.	Moderate Conservative Union
12.	Christian Democratic Union
13.	Lithuanian Poles' Electoral Action
14.	Lithuanian People's Union "For the Fair Lithuania"
15.	"Young Lithuanians", New Nationalists and Political Prisoners Union
	Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party
	Lithuanian Democratic Party
	Lithuanian Freedom League

	Lithuanian Party of Justice
	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party
	Lithuanian Socialist Party
	Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees
	Modern Christian Democratic Union
	New Democracy Party
	Republican Party
	The Homeland People's Party
	The National Democratic Party
	The Union of the Russians of Lithuania

Note. If the first column is empty (i.e. number missing), the party or political organisation does not participate in elections with its own list - it delegates candidates to a coalition list or nominates them only in single-mandate Constituencies

[55]

2. List of Political Organisations:

Homeland Peoples' Party: Founded October 1999. Chair DR. LAIMA ANDRIKIENE.

Homeland Union - Lithuanian Conservatives (TS - LK): Gedimino pr. 15, Vilnius 2001; tel (2) 615-261; fax (2) 226-739; f.1993 from elements of Sajudis; Chair VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS; 17,000 mems.

Lithuanian Centre Union (LCS): Literatu 8, Vilnius 2001; tel (2) 224-095; f.1993; Chair KESTUTIS GLAVECKAS; 1,500 mems. (See *New Policy*)

Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party (LKDP): Pylimo 36/2, Vilnius 2001; tel and fax (2) 227-387; f.1905, re-est 1989; Chair ZIGMAS ZINKEVICIUS; 10,500 mems.

Lithuanian Citizens Alliance: _algirio 90-508a, Vilnius, tel (2) 733-394; f.1996; Chair MECISLAV VASKOVIC.

Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDDP): B Radvilaites 1, Vilnius 2600 tel 22-61 39 07 as a parliamentary social-democratic successor party to the Communist Party of Lithuania; formed a coalition with the Social Democratic Party to contest the 2000 legislative elections. Formally merged with the Social Democratic Party in January 2001.

Lithuanian Democratic Party: A Jaksto 9, Vilnius 2600; tel (2) 626-033; fax (2) 469-671; f.1902, re-est 1989; Chair SAULIUS PECELIUNAS; 2,000 mems.

Lithuanian Economic Party: Savanoriu pr 7 Vilnius 2015; tel and fax (2) 631-564; f.

1995; Chair KLEMENSAS SEPUTIS; 1,000 mems.

Lithuanian Freedom League: Darbininku 15-50 Vilnius; tel (2) 769-286; f.1995; Chair ANTANAS TERLECKAS.

Lithuanian Freedom Union: Donelaicio 6 Kaunas; tel (7) 202-594; f.1994; Described by the newspaper *Lietuvos Rytas* and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews as a radical, anti-Semitic party. Leader: VYTAUTAS SUSTAUSKAS. [43a][43b][43c]

Lithuanian Green Party: Pylimo 38-1 Vilnius 2024; tel and fax (2) 224-215; f.1989; Chair RIMANTAS ASTRAUSKAS; 300 mems.

Lithuanian Independence Party: Pylimo 38/1 Vilnius 2600; tel (2) 614-721; fax (2) 223-639; f.1990; Chair VALENTINAS SAPALAS; 450 mems.

Lithuanian Justice Party: Nemuno 19 Kaunas; tel (7) 209-382; f.1995; Chair BRONIUS SIMANAVICIUS.

Lithuanian Liberal Union (LLS): A Jakoto g.9 Vilnius 2000; tel (370) 31 32 64; f.1990; Chair ROLANDAS PAKSAS (Prime Minister, October 2000); 1100 mems. (see *New Policy*).

Lithuanian National Party "Young Lithuania" (JNPJL): tel (7) 226-254; f.1988; Chair STANISLOVAS BUSKEVICIUS; 1000 mems

Lithuanian National Democratic Party (LNDP): Gedimino pr53, Vilnius: tel 22-39 67 05
Established January 1999. [10(n)]

Lithuanian National Union: Gedimino pr 22 Vilnius 2600; tel (2) 617-320; fax (2) 617-310; f.1924, refounded 1989; Chair GEDIMINAS SAKALNIKAS; 3,000 mems.

Lithuanian Peasant's Party (Lithuanian Farmer's Party): Blindziu 17 Vilnius; tel (2) 725-268; f.1905 as Lithuanian Farmers' Union, re-est 1990, renamed 1994; Leader RAMUNAS KARBAUSKIS; 1,000 mems.

Lithuanian People's Party: Pelesos 1/2 Vilnius; tel (2) 630-429; f.1996; Chair VYTAUTAS LAZINKA.

Lithuanian Poles' Electoral Action: Didzioji 40 Vilnius 2601; tel (2) 223-388; f.1994; Chair JAN SINKIEWICZ; 820 mems.

Lithuanian Reform Party: Gedimino 2 Vilnius; tel (2) 225-800; f.1996; Chair ALGIRDAS PILVELIS.

Lithuanian Republican Party: Pramonės pr 3-62 Kaunas 3031; tel (7) 752-214; active 1922-29; re-est 1991; Chair KAZIMIERAS PETRAITIS; 2,109 mems.

Lithuanian Russians' Union: Savanoriu pr 11-70 Vilnius 2000; tel and fax (2) 650-860; f.1995; Chair SERGEI DMITRIYEV; 1,000 mems. (see *Social Democratic Coalition*.)

Lithuanian Social Democratic Party: J Basanaviciaus 16/5 Vilnius 2009; tel (2) 652-380; fax (2) 652-157; f.1896, re-est 1989; Chair. RIMANTAS DAGYS; 2,500 mems. Formed

coalition with three other parties to contest the 2000 legislative elections (See *Social Democratic Coalition*.); Merged with the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party in January 2001. Party leader Algirdas Brazauskas became Prime Minister on 3 July 2001, following a working agreement with New Union-Social Liberals, New Democracy and the Peasants Party.

Lithuanian Social Justice Union: Zirmunu 30a-42 Vilnius; tel (2) 732-055; f.1996; Chair KAZIMIERAS JONAS JOCIUS.

Lithuanian Socialist Party: Seskines 67-58 Vilnius 2010; tel (2) 419-765; f.1994; Chair ALBINAS VISOCKAS; 800 mems.

Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees (LPKTS): Laisves al 39 Kaunas 3000; tel (7) 223-508; fax (7) 774-100; f.1988; Chair P. JAKUCIONIS; 50,000 mems.

Moderate Conservative Union (NKS): Vilnius: f.2000; centre-right; Chair. GEDIMINAS VAGNORIUS

Modern Christian Democratic Union: Founded in March 2000 by members who split from the Christian Democratic Party. (See *New Policy*.)

New Democratic Party /'New Democracy' (Lithuanian Women's Party): A Jaksto 9 Vilnius 2001; tel (2) 232-834; fax (2) 221-995 ; f.1995; formerly Lithuanian Women's Party, current name adopted in 1998; Chair KAZIMIERA PRUNSKIENE; 2000 mems. (see *Social Democratic Coalition*.)

'New Policy' Bloc/Coalition: Coalition which formed the government after the October 2000 elections, until June 2001. Comprised the Lithuanian Liberal Union, New Union (Social Liberals), Centre Union and Modern Christian Democratic Union. Leaders were: Rolandas Paksas, who was Prime Minister until 20 June 2001 (Liberal Union) and Seimas Speaker Arturas Paulauskas (NU). The governing coalition collapsed on 22 June 2001 following policy disagreements between New Union members and the other three parties.

New Union (Social Liberals) - also known as New Alliance: Sodu g.4, Vilnius 2006; tel (2)791-664; f.1998; centre-left; Leader: Seimas Speaker ARTURAS PAULAUSKAS. Following the collapse of the New Policy bloc Government in June 2001, entered into a working agreement with the Social Democrats, New Democracy and the Peasants Party. Has six Ministers in the Brazauskas government.

Social Democratic Coalition (A. Brazauskas Social Democratic Coalition): Formed to contest the October 2000 parliamentary elections, and comprised the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, New Democracy (formerly the Women's Party), and the Union of Russians. Leader: Algirdas Brazauskas.

[1b][Party websites]

(Initials in brackets correspond with the Lithuanian party name.)

ANNEX B

GOVERNMENT: 12 July 2001

MINISTRY	MINISTER	PARTY
Prime Minister	Algirdas Brazauskas	Social Democrat
Foreign Affairs	Antanas Valionas *	Non-party, NU nominee
Defence	Linas Linkevicius *	Non-affiliated
Economy	Petras Cesna	Non-affiliated
Finance	Dalia Gribauskaite	Non-affiliated
Justice	Vytautas Markevicius *	Non-party, NU nominee
Interior	Juozas Bernatonis	Social Democrat
Transport	Zigmantas Balcytis	Social Democrat
Education & Science	Algirdas Monkevicius *	New Union
Culture	Roma Dovydeniene	Social Democrat
Health	Romauldas Dobrovolskis *	Non-party, NU nominee
Agriculture	Kestutis Kristinaitis *	Non-party, NU nominee
Social Security & Labour	Vilija Blinkeviciute *	Non-party, NU nominee
Communications	Zigmantas Balcitis	Social Democrat
Environmental protection	Arunas Kundrotas	Non-affiliated

[7e]

* these Ministers also served in the previous government of Rolandas Paksas

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

1915: Lithuania occupied by German troops.

September 1917: Lithuanian Council elected.

16 February 1918: Lithuania declared independence.

July 1920: Soviet Union recognised Lithuanian independence in the Treaty of Moscow.

October 1920: Poland annexed the region of Vilnius but was forced to recognise the rest of Lithuania as independent (with its temporary capital at Kaunas).

August 1922: Lithuania's first Constitution, which declared Lithuania a parliamentary democracy, was adopted.

December 1926: Antanas Smetona seized power in a military coup d'etat and established an authoritarian regime which lasted until 1940.

September 1939: Following the outbreak of the Second World War, a treaty, with nazi Germany, granted the control of Lithuania to the USSR.

September 1939: Soviet troops seized Vilnius and granted the city and its region to Lithuania.

October 1939: Lithuania compelled to agree to the stationing of 20,000 Soviet troops on its territory.

June 1940: USSR despatched 100,000 troops to Lithuania and forced the Lithuanian Government to resign.

3 August 1940: Lithuania formally became a Union Republic of the USSR. The establishment of Soviet rule was followed by the arrest and imprisonment of many Lithuanian politicians and government officials.

June 1941: Lithuania was invaded by German forces . Of Lithuania's 150,000 Jewish pre-war population 90% (135,000) were murdered during Nazi occupation (1941-45)

1944: Soviet Army returned to Lithuania and restored Soviet rule. Some 150,000 people were deported during Soviet rule (1944-1991); leaders and members of the Roman Catholic Church were persecuted and imprisoned. Lithuanian political parties were disbanded and political power became the exclusive preserve of the Communist Party of Lithuania (CPL) the local branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

1960/1970s: Significant dissident movement was established in Lithuania.

June 1988: Sajudis - the Lithuanian Movement for Reconstruction was established.

March 1989: Sajudis won 36 of the 42 popularly-elected seats at elections to the all-Union Congress of Peoples Deputies.

18 May 1989: The CPL dominated Supreme Soviet approved a declaration of Lithuanian sovereignty in an attempt to retain some measure of popular support.

December 1989: The CPL declared itself an independent party, no longer subordinate to the CPSU. It adopted a new programme that condemned communist policies of the past and declared support for multi-party democracy and independent statehood.

February & March 1990: Sajudis won an overall majority following elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet.

11 March 1990: The restoration of independence of Lithuania was declared by the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet. Soviet forces occupied CPL buildings in Vilnius and took control of newsprint premises.

April 1990: An economic embargo was imposed by the Soviet Union suspending vital fuel supplies and it remained in force for two months until Lithuania agreed to a six month moratorium on independence.

January 1991: Landbergis, chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet announced the suspension of the moratorium since there had been no substantive negotiations. The Soviet government dispatched special units of troops (OMON) to Vilnius who occupied former CPSU properties.

Mid-January 1991: 13 people were killed, and about 500 injured, when Soviet troops seized the broadcasting centre in Vilnius. The military intervention strengthened support for independence.

9 February 1991: Referendum was held regarding independence: 90% voted in favour of an independent Lithuania and the withdrawal to Soviet troops.

August 1991: After the coup against Gorbachev in Moscow, on 21 August, OMON military vehicles entered Vilnius. Within hours, however, they withdrew following the collapse of the coup and the Lithuanian Government ordered the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the republic and banned the LCP.

6 September 1991: The USSR State Council recognised the independence of Lithuania.

July 1992: The new parliament, the Seimas, approved a new electoral law, where by Lithuania's first post-Soviet legislative elections, scheduled for late 1992, would be held under a mixed system of majority voting.

September 1992: The Russian Government agreed to repatriate from Lithuania all of its troops by the end of August 1993.

25 October 1992 & 15 November 1992: Elections to the Seimas took place. The Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP) emerged convincingly as the leading party. The defeat of the Sajudis was attributed to popular disenchantment with its economic

reform.

6 November 1992: The present Lithuanian Constitution was adopted by the Seimas.

Early 1993: By early 1993 more than 90% of Lithuania's non-ethnic Lithuanian residents had been granted Lithuanian citizenship, under the country's new citizenship laws adopted in 1989.

14 February 1993: The Presidential election was won by Algirdas Brazauskas. He subsequently announced his resignation from the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP).

31 August 1993: The final Russian troops left Lithuania as scheduled, whereupon full state sovereignty was perceived as having been restored to Lithuania.

November 1993: Lithuania and Russia signed several agreements, including an accord on most-favoured nation status in bilateral trade, and one on the transport via Lithuania of Russian military equipment and troops from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad Oblast.

1994: Disagreements arose between Lithuania and Russia following Lithuania's decision to introduce new regulations governing military transits. In response Russia delayed the implementation of a previous trade agreement.

January 1995: An agreement was reached between the two countries, although the controversy was later revived in 1995.

December 1995: The banking crisis culminated when the operations of the country's two largest commercial banks, the Lithuanian Joint-Stock Innovation Bank (LJIB) and Litimpex Banks were suspended.

October & November 1996: Parliamentary elections took place. The Homeland Union [TS(LK)] won 70 seats and the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party (LKDP) won 16 seats. The parties formed a coalition government.

6 January 1998: Valdas Adamkus, 71 year old American-Lithuanian, was elected President of Lithuania.

21 December 1998: The Seimas voted to abolish the death penalty.

3 May 1999: Gedimas Vagnorius resigned as Prime Minister. He was succeeded by former Vilnius mayor Rolandas Paksas, then a member of the Homeland Union, on 18 May.

June 1999: The Christian Democrats ended their formal coalition agreement with the Homeland Union, but kept their ministers in the Cabinet and continued to support the government in parliament

27 October 1999: Paksas resigned the premiership following a dispute over an oil refinery privatisation deal. Andrius Kubilius became Prime Minister on 29 October.

11 December 1999: At the European Union summit in Helsinki, Lithuania was invited to begin accession negotiations from 28 March 2000. (Lithuania had applied to join the EU in

1995.)

19 March 2000: Municipal elections were held.

8 October 2000: The General Election took place. No party or coalition secured an outright majority; the left-of-centre Social Democratic Coalition, led by former President Brazuskas, won 51 of the 141 seats in the Seimas. After the election, the Lithuanian Liberal Union, the New Union, and two smaller parties entered into a formal coalition agreement known as the *New Policy Bloc*, with 66 seats in the Seimas. Rolandas Paksas, now leader of the Lithuanian Liberal Union was, accordingly, nominated by President Adamkus to form a government; this achieved parliamentary support on 26 October.

20 June 2001: Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas resigned following the resignation from his Cabinet of the six New Union ministers. Economy Minister Gentvilas was appointed acting Prime Minister. On 22 June, the New Policy Bloc coalition collapsed after negotiations between the parties failed to produce agreement on certain policy issues.

26 June 2001: The Social Democratic Party entered into a working agreement with the New Union (Social Liberal) and New Democracy parties; the Peasants' Party also subsequently included.

29 June 2001: The leader of the center-left Social Democratic Party, Algirdas Brazauskas, was nominated by President Adamkus to form a government; his appointment as Prime Minister was ratified by the Seimas on 3 July.

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