

Herald Sun

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Nazi hunters offer rewards

NAZI hunting groups placed advertisements in several newspapers Lithuania, offering a \$US10,000 (\$17,800) reward for evidence leading to the prosecution of anyone who participated in the Holocaust during World War II.

"Jews of Lithuania did not disappear! They were mercilessly massacred in Vilnius, Kaunas Siauliai and over 100 other places of mass murder," read the text of the large black-and-white ad, featuring a photograph of Nazis beating Jews to death with clubs.

The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre - which has devoted decades to tracking down ex-Nazis - and the Miami-based Targum Shlishi Foundation designed and paid for the advertisement, which included contact telephone numbers of the Lithuanian prosecutors office.

Efraim Zuroff, head of the Wiesenthal Centre's Jerusalem office, announced the project to offer money-for-evidence this summer during a visit to Lithuania; he dubbed the program "Operation Last Chance". He said he would run similar advertisements in the other two Baltic countries, Latvia and Estonia.

Over 90 per cent of Lithuania's pre-war Jewish community of 240,000 perished during the Nazi occupation. Zuroff has said none of the Baltic states has done enough to confront the fate of their pre-war Jewish populations after the three nations regained independence during the 1991 Soviet collapse.

Historians say hundreds or possibly thousands of collaborators helped murder Jews in Lithuania, which had one of eastern Europe's largest and most culturally active Jewish communities before the war.

After regaining independence, this nation of 3.5 million people promised to try those who participated in the massacre of Jews. Several of men in their 80s and 90s were charged - but only one was ever convicted. No suspects spent any time in prison.