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Brothers tackle 'amazing and painful' story of Lithuanian survivors

SURVIVING History will have its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival's Short Film Corner next month.

Directed by London brothers Jesse and Daniel Quinones, this moving 30-minute documentary portrays the story of seven Lithuanian Jews as they relive memories of surviving the Holocaust.

"To hear their stories has been one of the most amazing and painful experiences of my life," Jesse said.

"Some of the things they had to endure were just heartbreaking. You can't imagine how a human being could do this to another — especially on this scale."

Lithuania, once described as the 'Jerusalem of the North', witnessed the highest percentage of Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

Of the 240,000 Jews in the region, 228,000 were murdered, many at the hands of fellow Lithuanians.

Daniel said: "To think that out of 240,000 Jews there are only 107 left is astonishing. It is as close to annihilation as you can get. These numbers are so dramatic because Lithuanians were complicit with the Nazis.

"They murdered a lot of people. There is a lot of blood on their hands."

The film, produced by Living Imprint and Woolfcub Productions, was shot in and around Vilnius.

It is especially poignant against the backdrop of a recent surge in antisemitic activity in Lithuania — most notably the Jewish community centre defaced by swastikas and burning smokestacks.

"There has never been a more important time to make this film," said Jesse. "This is a real taboo subject in Lithuania.

"No one wants to talk about it. To get seven survivors to open up has been a miracle. And now the chance to get it out to a wider public, Cannes of all places, has just been a blessing.

"It means finally this issue will be brought out into the open."