

Jewish luminaries petition EU parliament over settlements

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EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - The leader of the Green group in the European Parliament, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and French philosopher Bernard Henri-Levy are spearheading a new campaign for the EU to put pressure on Israel over settlement building.

The two men have joined a fast-growing list of over 3,500 signatories in [an online petition entitled "Call for Reason"](#) which is to be presented to the EU parliament at a press conference in Brussels on Monday (3 May).

The petition says that Israel's policy of settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is "morally and politically wrong" and feeds "the unacceptable delegitimation process that Israel currently faces abroad."

It adds that: "It is essential therefore that the European Union, along with the United States, put pressure on both parties and help them achieve a reasonable and rapid solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict ... Systematic support of Israeli government policy is dangerous and does not serve the true interests of the state of Israel."

The vast majority of signatories comes from Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland and is composed of academics, teachers, students, medical professionals and lawyers.

Other prominent supporters include philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, historian Zeev



The initiative is to be launched by Green MEPs at the European Parliament in Brussels on Monday (Photo: EUobserver)

Sternhell, Israel's former ambassador to France, Elie Barnavi, and the country's former ambassador to Germany, Avi Primor.

Two French centre-left MEPs, Vincent Peillon and Henri Weber, have also signed up, together with a number of EU officials, such as Claude Rakovsky, a head of unit in the European Commission's competition department.

The French-based group behind the project, JCall, says it models itself on J Street, a US-based NGO of mostly left-leaning American Jews and "supporters of Israel" set up to promote a two state solution to the Middle East conflict.

The JCall initiative has been attacked by some leading Jewish commentators.

Emmanuel Navon, a professor at Tel Aviv university, said its signatories are clinging to a "failed ideology" and "bankrupt ideas" [in his blog](#) for the right-wing Israeli daily, the Jerusalem Post.

"Being a realist means accepting the fact that Israel can neither achieve peace with the Palestinians (a painful admission if you're from the left) nor maintain its sovereignty over all of the historical land of Israel (a no less painful admission if you're from the right)," he said.

"This will largely be used by those who are true enemies of Israel," said Richard Prasquier, the head of the CRIF, the umbrella organisation for Jews in France, [in French daily Le Figaro](#).

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