

May 2, 2010 Sunday 18 Iyyar 5770 9:11 IST  Print

THE JERUSALEM POST

JPOST.com
Israel's best-selling English daily and most-read English website

JCall, the 'European J Street,' to be launched in Brussels

By ANICA
POMMERAY
30/04/2010

New group founded by over 40 European public figures and members of various Jewish associations.

Over 40 European public figures and members of various Jewish associations have joined forces to found JCall, an organization petitioning under the banner of a "European Jewish call for reason."

Presenting itself as the "European version of America's J Street," JCall's official launch will take place at the European Parliament in Brussels on May 3.

"French, Belgian, Swiss and Italian public figures are mainly involved in the project, but we hope to gather the support of many other people across Europe," said David Chemla, head of Peace Now's French branch and one of JCall's main initiators, who will speak at Monday's event.

"We are citizens of European countries, Jews, and involved in the political and social life of our respective countries," the newly formed organization declares in its petition, which has already gathered over 2,000 signatures. "Whatever our personal paths, our connection to the State of Israel is part of our identity. We are concerned about the future of the State of Israel, to which we are unfailingly committed."

Joined by renowned European philosophers, professors and politicians – including philosopher Bernard Henri-Levy, who will be representing France at the Brussels conference; Dr. David Hirsch, founder of Engage, an association committed to fighting the UK boycott of Israeli universities; and Daniel Cohn Bendit, a member of the European Parliament (Green party) – JCall has become "a new voice for peace," according to Chemla.

"There are approximately 700,000 Jews in France today, and only about 10 percent of them are officially affiliated with Jewish institutions. What about the other 80%? They are also very concerned by the situation in the Middle East, and their voice should be heard, too," he said on Wednesday.

"Our goals are twofold. First of all, we are very worried about the Israeli government's building policy, especially in east Jerusalem. We think it poses a great threat to the two-state solution and, therefore, to peace. But we also want to work against the constant efforts of delegitimization of Israel in European countries," Chemla explained.

"Of course, we understand that the Israeli government has to make its own decisions," he said. "But we believe that other voices should be heard, in Europe as in the United States. We have a responsibility, not only as Jews, but as Europeans. We have a historical responsibility to take action and play an active role toward peace in the Middle East."

Although JCall has no actual ties to J Street, the European initiative has received much encouragement from the US, according to Chemla: "They believe in us. We have the same intentions, so I think they will be following our project very closely."

However, for Emmanuel Navon, Paris-born political commentator and professor at Tel Aviv University's Abba Eban Graduate Program for Diplomacy Studies, supporters of JCall, as well as J Street, "simply do not understand the situation."

"I wonder if these people even watch the news! The situation has changed, and it is no secret to say that Israel has already accepted the two-state solution. Therefore, there is absolutely no point in trying to convince the Israeli government of anything," asserted Navon. "On the other hand, what these people do not seem to understand is that every time Israel offered concessions for peace, the Palestinians systematically refused. That is the main issue today – not trying to push for a two-state solution, but getting the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations."

According to Elie Barnavi, former Israeli ambassador to France and another speaker at the Brussels conference, "it is not enough to speak about a two-state solution, it is also essential to do everything for this solution to take form. And that will only begin with the end of colonization."

He said it was "time for other voices to be heard. Israel is in an unbearable situation today, because of its irresponsible government. Time is not our friend. JCall will finally give the opportunity to European Jews to speak out, before it's too late."



[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [RSS](#)

All rights reserved © 1995 - 2009 The Jerusalem Post.

כל הזכויות שמורות © 2009- נט אפיקי תקשורת אינטר מדיה בע"מ