

# A pan-European pro-Israel body, aimed at deepening relations between the EU and Israel

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, September 14, 2006

European Jewish Press 14 September 2006

Region: [Europe](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

## A structure for EU parliamentarians friends of Israel

**By Yossi Lempkowicz**

European Jewish Press

BRUSSELS (EJP)— A pan-European pro-Israel body, aimed at deepening relations between the EU and Israel, is to be formally launched this week in Brussels. The new organisation, called “European Friends of Israel”, comes at a time when relations between Israel and the Europeans have been rather tense in the framework of the recent war between Israel and Hezbollah. It will work at the level of the 25 EU member states plus the two future members, Bulgaria and Romania.

EJP spoke to Dimitri Dombret, EFI’s director, about the objectives of this new group.

EJP : Why European Friends of Israel now ?

Dimitri Dombret : We came to the conclusion that there are various Israel friendship groups in Europe coordinated at national level. There are also many members of the European Parliament sympathetic to Israel . But there is a lack of a European umbrella structure aimed at federating all these pro-Israel supports in Europe. EFI will give an added value to all these parliamentarians, both on EU and national level, to help and accompany them in their daily work, providing information and organising parliamentary missions in Israel

EJP: Is this the sole objective ?

DD : Not at all. It is also aimed at improving relations between the EU and Israel. Israel enjoys already today a close cooperation with the EU. However it deserves a better and stronger recognition of its privileged links with Europe, on economic, cultural and democratic level. We want to enlarge European support to Israel.

EJP : But there are already pro-Israel lobbies in Europe ?

DD : Yes, but EFI is the first trans-national initiative. We are in contact with all parliamentary friendship groups existing in the soon to be 27 EU member states.

EJP : Will it be limited to the EU ?

DD : Yes, certainly.

EJP : Is AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) your model ?

DD : We don't want to be compared with AIPAC. Here, it's an initiative taken by European parliamentarians sympathetic to Israel who recognised the necessity of such a structure. We also realised that they didn't know each other and that they needed a platform to help them in their work. EFI's steering committee is made up of 11 European deputies from different political parties and various countries namely Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom.

EJP : What will be EFI's activities ?

DD : They will be manifold but first we will enhance the network we have established with all the Israel friendship groups in the various parliaments. We need to identify their needs and provide them with assistance through our secretariat. They will be informed through both a website which will be launched in the coming weeks as well as a newsletter. Amongst other planned activities EFI will also organise conferences and parliamentary missions in Israel.

EJP : Relations between EU and Israel have been tense in the wake of the recent conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Do you think that the time is appropriate to launch such an initiative ?

DD : Absolutely. Not only has Israel sent a message against terrorism and Hezbollah but it is also holding its hand to Lebanon. Israel wants only one thing, it's peace. European involvement in the Mideast is growing with European major participation in UNIFIL, the peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, the border control in Rafah and the contribution to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. So we need to improve EU-Israel relations.

EJP : But isn't Israel more interested in its relations with the US ?

DD : Ties between Israel and the EU are very strong. Especially at a commercial level, the EU is Israel's privileged partner. Israel has both a European culture and a kind of American lifestyle.

EJP : But at political level, the American voice is dominating Israeli politics ?

DD : Yes but we do not want to change this. We are not going to interfere in the privileged relations between Israel and the US. We want only to give Europe a structure to reinforce relations with Israel. In the recent developments in the region, the European Union has proven that it could speak with one unified voice. The Europeans are strongly engaged in the UNIFIL force and the Israeli government is very much conscious to this fact. EFI will provide the platform for the directly elected leadership of the EU to have their voice resonating in Israel. Europe is definitively a credible partner that can help for bringing the peace in the region.

EJP : What about all the MEP's who are less pro-Israel or unfavourable ?

DD : We are already working with a core group of 150 MEP's from various political groups. We are starting with the friendship group but with plans of broadening it. Our hope is that the parliamentarians will relay the message to their colleagues both on national and EU level.

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Global Research](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)