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## Jewish liberals slam de Blasio over AIPAC address

'your job is not to do AIPAC's bidding when they call you to do so,' angered Jews write NYC mayor.

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New York City's new mayor, Bill de Blasio, is taking some flak over his recent speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in which he promised "that City Hall will always be open to AIPAC, that when you need me to stand by you in Washington or anywhere, I will answer the call, and I'll answer it happily, 'cause that's my job."

The lefty mayor's pledge to be a loyal ally to the pro-Israel lobbying group irked some prominent lefty Jews. In an open letter sent to de Blasio today, 58 Jewish liberals told the mayor that "your job is not to do AIPAC's bidding when they call you to do so."

"AIPAC speaks for Israel's hard-line government and its right-wing supporters, and for them alone; it does not speak for us," they concluded. (The letter's full text is pasted below.)

The letter's signatories include a mix of rabbis, philanthropists, activists and cultural figures.

The list — while solidly left-leaning — has a bit of political diversity, with liberal Zionist journalist Peter Beinart signed on alongside Rebecca Vilkomerson, executive director of the far-left Jewish Voice for Peace. There are some significant Jewish communal figures, including Karen Adler, the president of the Jewish Communal Fund, Rabbis Rolando Matalon and Felicia Sol of prominent Upper West Side shul B'nai Jeshurun, and Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum of the city's leading gay and lesbian synagogue. There are also a few semi-bold-face names, such as famed feminist Gloria Steinem, "Vagina Monologues" playwright Eve Ensler, and novelists Anne Roiphe and Erica Jong.

The letter's signatories are not the only ones criticizing the de Blasio's AIPAC appearance. The absence of the engagement from de Blasio's publicized schedule and the ban on press at the event has drawn criticism for being inconsistent with the principle of open governance. Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the former president of the Union for Reform Judaism, wrote in Haaretz that de Blasio and AIPAC had, with their secrecy, "managed to take a routine political event intended to promote support for Israel and turn it into a mini-crisis and a major embarrassment for all concerned."

### Here is the text of the letter:

January 29, 2014

An Open Letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio:

We are Jewish residents of New York who read, in the leaked transcript of your private speech to a meeting of AIPAC leaders, the following:

"City Hall will always be open to AIPAC. When you need me to stand by you in Washington or anywhere, I will answer the call and I'll answer it happily 'cause that's my job."

We understand that the job of mayor of New York is a complex one that often calls for your participation on the international stage, and we would not presume to define your job for you. But we do know that the needs and concerns of many of your constituents—U.S. Jews like us among them—are not aligned with those of AIPAC, and that no, your job is not to do AIPAC's bidding when they call you to do so. AIPAC speaks for Israel's hard-line government and its right-wing supporters, and for them alone; it does not speak for us.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth J. Abram  
Karen R. Adler  
Arlene Alda  
Anita Altman  
Esther Ann-Asch  
Emanuel Ax  
Peter Beinart  
Andrew Berger  
Loren Bevans  
Martin I. Bresler  
Kenneth David Burrows  
Howard Clyman  
Rabbi Rachel Cowan  
Barbara Deinhardt  
Barbara Dobkin  
Eugene Eisner  
Laurel W. Eisner  
Daniel Engelstein  
Eve Ensler  
Danny Goldberg  
Sally Gottesman  
Linda Gottlieb  
Laurence Greenwald  
Jane Hirschmann  
Erica Jong  
Peter A. Joseph  
Alice Kessler-Harris  
Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum  
Gil Kulick  
Martha Weinman Lear  
Bobbie Leigh  
Jonathan Leigh  
Alan H. Levine  
Rabbi Ellen Lippmann  
Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon  
Marilyn Kleinberg Neimark  
Donna Nevel  
Kathleen Peratis  
Letty Cottin Pogrebin  
Bertrand B. Pogrebin  
Michael Ratner  
Anne Roiphe

Betty Rollin  
Al Ruben  
Marlene Sanders  
James Schamus  
Dan Silverman  
Beverly Solocheck  
Carla Singer  
Rabbi Felicia Sol  
Alisa Solomon  
Gloria Steinem  
Herbert Teitelbaum  
Rebecca Vilkomerson  
Rabbi Burton Visotzky  
Peter Weiss  
Jack Willis  
Eugenia Zukerman