

May 27, 2026

Dear Melat,

Two weeks before your interview with Hasan Piker, we sat down so I could share some perspective on the Jewish community's lived experience. As Senior Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council—the largest collective voice of Jewish organizations across Colorado—I spend much of my time hearing directly from Jews of all backgrounds about their sense of safety, belonging, and identity in this moment.

We met despite both knowing your positions on Israel are not shared by most of the Jewish community. I appreciated that you were willing to engage directly and that you were clear about where you stood. But that was not the point of the conversation. I did not ask you to abandon your politics or adopt mine. In fact, I explicitly told you that was not my goal.

My goal was to help navigate a very specific challenge—you have made opposition to Israel central to your campaign while running to represent the congressional district with the largest Jewish population in Colorado. Even if it is not your intent, many of the people you hope to represent feel threatened by some of your rhetoric and policies, particularly amid rising antisemitism. I tried to explain why, and to encourage a more nuanced, empathetic, and careful way of discussing these issues.

Again, I was not asking you to change your foreign policy positions or see the conflict the way I do. I was asking you to recognize your responsibility to express those positions in a way that causes less harm to the Jews you hope to represent. And I wanted to help you meet that responsibility, knowing these issues are hard.

But during the Hasan Piker interview, you spoke about these issues in many of the exact ways I had urged you to avoid.

I was struck by how little nuance you brought to the topic of Israel compared to other parts of the interview. Throughout the conversation, you spoke thoughtfully about systems, context, and the dangers of simplistic worldviews. When discussing China, for example, you called for measured diplomacy and did not feel the need to reduce either the country or our relationship with it to its serious and ongoing human rights abuses. Yet when the subject turned to Israel, that instinct for complexity disappeared into moral certainty.

You discussed Israel almost exclusively through the lens of power and oppression, as if the realities in the region could be flattened into a binary (and distinctly American) ideological framework rather than understood as a collision of multiple histories, traumas, truths, and impossible choices. The only time you referenced the Oct. 7 attacks themselves was to describe them as an “inevitable consequence of apartheid.” You argued that violence persists because there is “rarely ever . . . accountability for the perpetrators of that violence,” yet never once grappled with Hamas’s role—or the broader role of Iran and its regional proxies—in perpetuating violence, terror, and instability throughout the region.

Jewish history, fear, trauma, vulnerability, and lived experience were entirely excluded from the contextual framework you extended to everyone else.

And that absence of nuance inevitably produced an absence of empathy.

During our meeting, we discussed how the reductive and inflammatory way people talk about Israel can endanger Jews here in Colorado. How this rhetoric turns Jews into avatars of oppression rather than human beings with their own stories.

We also discussed how it is both possible and necessary to advocate for Palestinian safety, freedom, and dignity without dismissing Israeli security concerns. How acknowledging the complexity of the situation—or the sincere and historical connection many Jews have to Israel as both a homeland and refuge—does not diminish Palestinian or Israeli suffering. It simply signals that everyone affected by the conflict is being seen as fully human.

But very little of that empathy or shared humanity appeared in your interview.

Instead, many Jews watching saw their fears and lived experiences either ignored or treated as morally insignificant. When asked whether the United States should provide Israel with defensive weapons, you responded with the quip that “a weapon is a weapon,” as though there is no meaningful distinction between a sword and a shield, and as though the countless civilian lives saved by defensive systems did not matter.

And that brings me to my central point: care.

Care is not agreement or capitulation. It is the willingness to speak with greater precision, humility, and awareness of impact.

I have spoken with many progressive leaders whose views on Israel differ sharply from the broad consensus within the Jewish community and never felt compelled to write a letter like this. My test is not ideological agreement. It is whether a leader can hear a minority community explain how certain rhetoric and behaviors are affecting them and respond with greater care rather than further harm.

That is why this interview was so troubling to many Jews in Colorado.

Not because you criticized Israel. But because, despite our conversation, you never made any real effort to model nuance, empathy, or care in one of the most polarized corners of our political culture. Instead, you reinforced many of the same reductive and dehumanizing dynamics that are making many Jews feel increasingly unsafe and alienated.

I am not asking you to agree with me about Israel. I am asking you to demonstrate the kind of pluralistic leadership that makes room for the concerns and hopes of Jews alongside those of everyone else.

JCRC remains committed to helping you do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Rattiner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brandon Rattiner  
Senior Director, JCRC