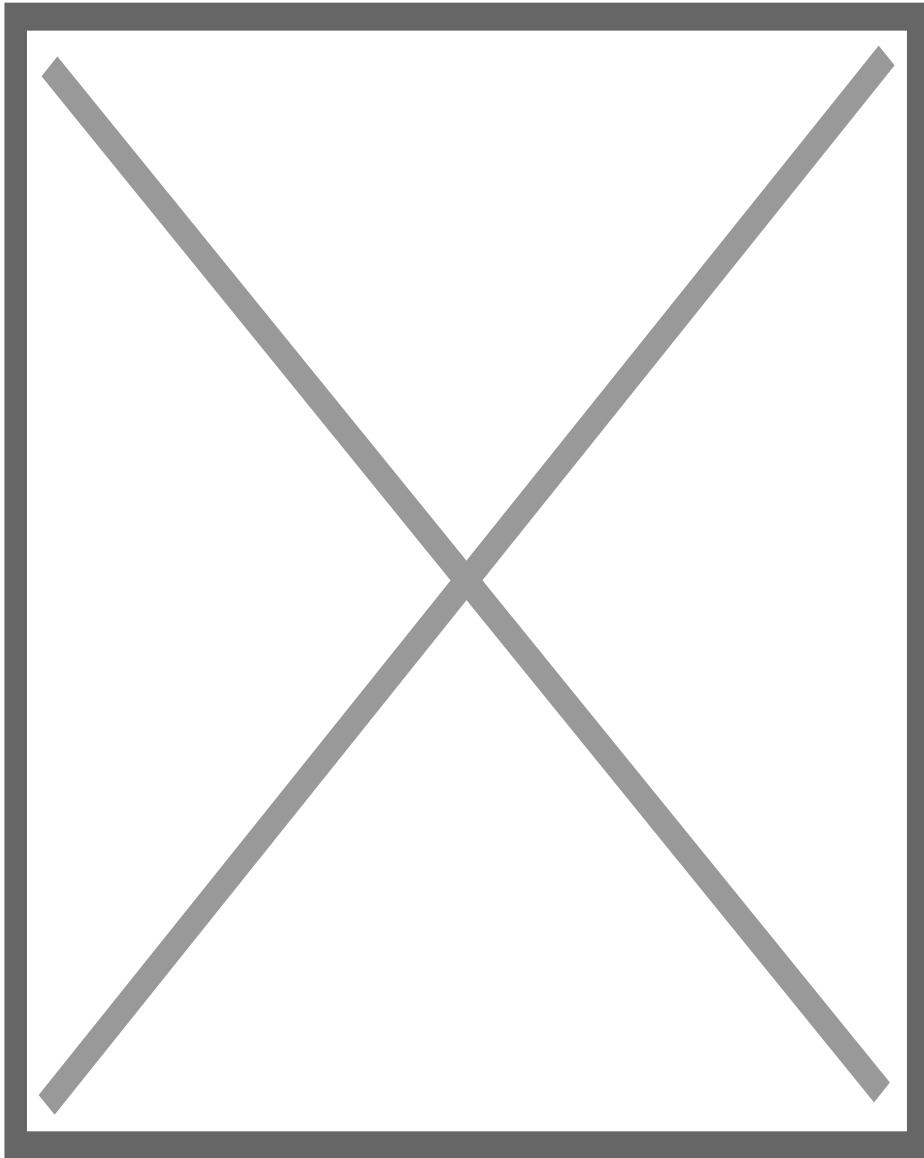


Upset in Colorado congressional race hinged on Israel

by [Louis Keene](#)

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Melat Kiros, center, with Michigan state Rep. Donovan McKinney, left, and Tennessee state Rep. Justin J. Pearson at the Colorado State Capitol this summer (Instagram)

A democratic socialist who put condemnation of Israel front and center in her campaign defeated a long-serving member of Congress in Colorado's congressional primary Tuesday, adding to recent upsets that are rocking the Democratic Party and Jewish politics.

Melat Kiros beat US Rep. Diana DeGette, a 15-term incumbent first elected in 1996, just one week after two New York candidates defeated sitting congressmen targeted as supporters of military aid to Israel.

“Denver voters of all ages, of all races, of all religions sent a clear message: We will not wait!” Kiros declared in her victory speech, which took aim at US aid for Israel. “We will not wait to reject corporate PACs like AIPAC. No, we will not wait to end the genocide in Palestine.”

She will face Republican Christy Peterson in the general election but is favored to win the heavily Democratic district.

Meanwhile, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser, the son and grandson of Holocaust survivors, won the Democratic nomination to replace the term-limited Gov. Jared Polis, who also is Jewish.

Kiros, who was born in 1997, the year DeGette took office, used Israel as a wedge throughout the campaign—calling for an arms embargo against Israel, including a suspension of funding for defensive weapons including the Iron Dome.

Hasan Piker, the progressive streamer who has been accused of trafficking in antisemitism, attended Kiros’s victory party in Denver Tuesday. During an interview on his podcast, Kiros called the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023 “the inevitable consequence of apartheid, of decades of occupation.”

Some Jewish Coloradans supported her, saying that her harsh criticism of Israel is necessary and warranted.

She also vows to abolish the federal Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agency and pass Medicare for all.

Kiros’s victory comes on the heels of the [defeat of two Democratic incumbents](#) in New York targeted specifically for their support of aid to Israel. A former Gaza war encampment leader on Columbia University’s campus, Darializa Avila Chevalier, beat incumbent Rep. Adriano Espaillat, while former New York City Comptroller Brad Lander will replace Rep. Dan Goldman. Another candidate who campaigned on Israel, Claire Valdez, secured the nomination for another House seat being vacated by Rep. Nydia Velazquez.

Like Kiros, both Valdez and Avila Chevalier are members of the Democratic Socialists of America. Lander, who is Jewish, left DSA after October 7, 2023, when DSA promoted a pro-Palestinian Times Square rally that Avila Chevalier attended.

Like Avila Chevalier, Kiros has come under scrutiny for her repudiation of Israel and its supporters.

In the final stretch of her campaign, Kiros gained national attention for declining to declare antisemitic the 2025 firebombing of a group holding a vigil in Boulder, saying in an interview: “I don’t know what was in the heart of the perpetrator. All I know is that he attacked innocent people because of what they might have believed,” adding that she could not say what they believed, either: “most of them were probably just there to ask that the people who were kidnapped on October 7 be returned to their families.”

The attacker, Mohammed Soliman, was heard saying “Free Palestine” as he threw Molotov cocktails and used an improvised flamethrower to burn 13 people, including an 82-year-old woman who later died of her wounds.

As a candidate, Kiros has said in interviews that weapons that defend Israeli citizens against attacks from Iran and Hezbollah “give Israel the cover” to continue policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing. (Genocide scholars have [debated](#) whether the war in Gaza rises to the level of genocide.)

And asked whether Israel “had it coming” on October 7, Kiros told a local news channel “no, not at all—it’s about understanding the conditions in which violence and war happens.” She said Israel had resisted change despite decades of international frustration with its policies; her job as a member of Congress, she said, was to change those conditions. —The Forward

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