

*CBS Mornings*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Hasan Piker Presents Challenge for Dem Candidates]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Now to a growing issue for some Democratic Party candidates in November. Some candidates are denouncing recent words by the progressive activist, Hassan Piker. The popular streamer has repeatedly criticized Israel for its war on Gaza. His rhetoric has become an issue for the Democratic Senate candidate in Michigan, Abdul el-Sayed, who is now trying to back away from Piker. Ed O’Keefe is covering the midterm elections for us. Ed, good morning.

ED O’KEEFE: Vlad, good to see you. Hasan Piker may not be a name that many of our viewers know, but his in — influence has only increased in recent months as he’s been campaigning with progressive or socialist candidates across the country. But he rocked the boat in recent days by making comments that both Democrats and Republicans call anti-Semitic. And el-Sayed has also denounced the comments, saying he stands with the Jewish community.

HASAN PIKER [on 08/20/26]: People don’t [EXPLETIVE] with Israel any longer.

O’KEEFE: Progressive influencer Hassan Piker has sent the Democratic Party into damage control after making incendiary comments during a live stream on Twitch last Thursday, arguing “the idea that Jews are monolithic is...a very dangerous mode of propaganda.”

PIKER [on 08/20/26]: If Jews in America keep putting this — this idea out there that they are singularly invested in Israel, eventually someone’s gonna come around and take action, not against the state of Israel mind you, but against American Jews.

O’KEEFE: Republicans quickly pointed to Piker’s ties to Abdul el-Sayed, the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in Michigan. [CHEERS] El-Sayed had embraced the left-wing podcaster during his primary campaign in hopes of winning over Piker’s more than eight million social media followers. [on 08/03/26] [TO EL-SAYED] But when he says things like he didn’t have an issue with Hezbollah, that resonates more in this state than in many others.

ABDUL EL-SAYED: Yeah, well, look, those are things that he and I are gonna disagree on, but again, the idea that somehow I’m gonna hold myself accountable to the worst thing he said and then not reach out to his audience, no.

O’KEEFE: But el-Sayed has repeatedly denounced anti-Semitism and said again in a statement Monday, his “commitment to Jewish safety is the same as my commitment to the safety of my own daughters.” Other Democrats were more direct. House Minority Leader Hakim Jeffries called Piker’s comments, “dangerous and anti-Semitic,” and Michigan’s Democratic Congresswoman Hillary Scholten dismissed the streamer as “a hack who thrives on hate.”

[EXPLOSION] Progressives like Piker and el-Sayed are outspoken critics of Israel's handling of the war in Gaza, a divisive issue for the Democratic Party ahead of the midterms.

JOEL PAYNE: I think the thing that Hassan Piker kind of forces on the people who he, you know, supports campaigns with, he forces them, I think, to clarify what do you agree with and what do you not agree with?

O'KEEFE: Piker says the response to his comments is a "Republican smear campaign." Mike Rogers, who's the Republican running against el-Sayed in Michigan, criticized the Democrats' decisions to distance himself from Piker and called el-Sayed a "con man," Gayle.

GAYLE KING: A lot of people watching. Thank you, Ed, very much.