

Bloomberg Defied a Flight Ban to Show Support for Israel, Defended the Country Shelling a School and Killing Sleeping Children

By [Michael Arria](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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In July 2014, Israel launched a series airstrikes on Gaza, kicking off a [51-day war](#) that left thousands dead. According to the United Nations, at least 2,104 Palestinian were killed, including 1,462 civilians. 495 were children and 253 were women. Over 17,000 homes were destroyed or severely damaged as a result of the attacks.

At the end of that month, the US Federal Aviation Administration briefly [banned](#) flights to Israel over security concerns. Former New York City Mayor, and presidential hopeful, Michael Bloomberg flew to Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel-Aviv to protest the ban and show support for the Israeli government.

“Safely landed at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv – here to show support for Israel’s right to defend itself,” he tweeted after arriving in the country.

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— Mike Bloomberg (@MikeBloomberg) [July 23, 2014](#)

Bloomberg later [penned](#) an op-ed (for the media company he owns) explaining the reasons for his trip in more detail and pledging his full-support for the Israel’s actions:

During my brief time in Israel, I met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat. I thanked them for standing with us after the Sept. 11 attacks and offered my strong support for their actions in response to the attacks by Hamas. Every country has a right to defend its borders from enemies, and Israel was entirely justified in crossing into Gaza to destroy the tunnels and rockets that threaten its sovereignty. I know what I would want my government to do if the U.S. was attacked by a rocket from above or via a tunnel from below; I think most Americans do, too.

In a *Face the Nation* appearance that August, Bloomberg was asked specifically about [Israel shelling](#) a United Nations school. The act was regarded as so callous that even the Obama administration put out a statement calling it “[totally indefensible.](#)” When asked if Israel had gone too far by host Norah O’Donnell, Bloomberg was clear in his response:

NORAH O'DONNELL: It's difficult to watch the images that we air on our network and other networks. This week a school attack that had thousands in there. It was described as bloody mattresses. Children killed who were sleeping next to their parents. The U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Thursday, "Nothing is more shameful than attacking sleeping children." Did Israel go too far?

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG: Israel cannot have a proportional response if people are firing rockets at their citizens. Can you imagine if one of the contiguous countries to America were firing rockets at America, the same people who are criticizing the Israelis would be going crazy demanding the President does more. Unfortunately, if Hamas hides among the innocent, the innocent are going to get killed because Israel just does not have any choice but to stop people firing- Hamas firing rockets at their citizens. They have a right to defend themselves and America would do exactly the same thing.

NORAH O'DONNELL: Doesn't the Geneva Conventions lay out that you cannot attack schools or hospitals?

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG: Nobody is attacking schools or hospitals. We are attacking Hamas. But Hamas is standing in the middle of a hospital. If they had- standing in the middle of a hospital and firing rockets at your kids, what would you expect us to do? Would you really want us to not try to stop them?

NORAH O'DONNELL: Mm-Hm.

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG: And, unfortunately, if there are innocents getting killed at the same time it's not Israel's fault.

In 2014, [@MikeBloomberg](#) was asked if Israel had gone too far after it bombed a school with thousands of Palestinian children inside. The Obama White House called the attack "indefensible." Bloomberg disagreed.

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"Israel cannot have a proportional response..." he said. pic.twitter.com/7e8VOrvd7N

— Walker Bragman (@WalkerBragman) [February 14, 2020](#)

Bloomberg's support for Israel has been consistently unequivocal. In 2015, he [pushed back](#) on the Obama administration's efforts to generate Democratic support for the Iran Deal. In 2013, Bloomberg [marched alongside](#) Danny Danon, the former deputy minister of Defense in the Netanyahu government, during New York City's Israel Day Parade. Danon is a vocal advocate for annexation: "The Jewish people are not settlers in the West Bank, but Israel will make the Palestinians settlers and Jordan will be the one taking control over Palestinians and that's it," he once told an Israeli TV station.

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Michael Arria is the U.S. correspondent for Mondoweiss.

Featured image: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu greets Bloomberg when the former mayor flew to Israel in July 2014 to support Israel's assault on Gaza and oppose the FAA decision to suspend domestic flights to the country

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