**Israel and Iran: A Love Story?**
*Transcript of Ted Talk by Ronny Edry:* [*http://www.ted.com/talks/israel\_and\_iran\_a\_love\_story/transcript?language=en*](http://www.ted.com/talks/israel_and_iran_a_love_story/transcript?language=en)

0:15 On March 14, this year [2012], I posted this poster on Facebook. This is an image of me and my daughter holding the Israeli flag. I will try to explain to you about the context of why and when I posted.

0:32 A few days ago, I was sitting waiting on the line at the grocery store, and the owner and one of the clients were talking to each other, and the owner was explaining to the client that we're going to get 10,000 missiles on Israel. And the client was saying, no, it's 10,000 a day. (Laughter)

0:55 ("10,000 missiles") This is the context. This is where we are now in Israel. We have this war with Iran coming for 10 years now, and we have people, you know, afraid. It's like every year it's the last minute that we can do something about the war with Iran. It's like, if we don't act now, it's too late forever, for 10 years now.

1:19 So at some point it became, you know, to me, I'm a graphic designer, so I made posters about it and I posted the one I just showed you before. Most of the time, I make posters, I post them on Facebook, my friends like it, don't like it, most of the time don't like it, don't share it, don't nothing, and it's another day So I went to sleep, and that was it for me. And later on in the night, I woke up because I'm always waking up in the night, and I went by the computer and I see all these red dots, you know, on Facebook, which I've never seen before. (Laughter) And I was like, "What's going on?" So I come to the computer and I start looking on, and suddenly I see many people talking to me, most of them I don't know, and a few of them from Iran, which is — What? Because you have to understand, in Israel we don't talk with people from Iran. We don't know people from Iran. It's like, on Facebook, you have friends only from — it's like your neighbors are your friends on Facebook. And now people from Iran are talking to me.

2:31 So I start answering this girl, and she's telling me she saw the poster and she asked her family to come because they don't have a computer, she asked her family to come to see the poster, and they're all sitting in the living room crying.

2:45 So I'm like, whoa. I ask my wife to come, and I tell her, you have to see that. People are crying, and she came, she read the text, and she started to cry. And everybody's crying now. (Laughter)

2:59 So I don't know what to do, so my first reflex, as a graphic designer, is, you know, to show everybody what I'd just seen, and people started to see them and to share them, and that's how it started. The day after, when really it became a lot of talking, I said to myself, and my wife said to me, I also want a poster so this is her. (Laughter) Because it's working, put me in a poster now.

3:27 But more seriously, I was like, okay, these ones work, but it's not just about me, it's about people from Israel who want to say something. So I'm going to shoot all the people I know, if they want, and I'm going to put them in a poster and I'm going to share them.

3:39 So I went to my neighbors and friends and students and I just asked them, give me a picture, I will make you a poster. And that's how it started. And that's how, really, it's unleashed, because suddenly people from Facebook, friends and others, just understand that they can be part of it. It's not just one dude making one poster, it's — we can be part of it, so they start sending me pictures and ask me, "Make me a poster. Post it. Tell the Iranians we from Israel love you too." It became, you know, at some point it was really, really intense. I mean, so many pictures, so I asked friends to come, graphic designers most of them, to make posters with me, because I didn't have the time. It was a huge amount of pictures. So for a few days, that's how my living room was.

4:30 And we received Israeli posters, Israeli images, but also lots of comments, lots of messages from Iran. And we took these messages and we made posters out of it, because I know people: They don't read, they see images. If it's an image, they may read it.

4:49 So here are a few of them.

4:52 ("You are my first Israelian friend. I wish we both get rid of our idiot politicians, anyway nice to see you!")

4:54 ("I love that blue. I love that star. I love that flag.") This one is really moving for me because it's the story of a girl who has been raised in Iran to walk on an Israeli flag to enter her school every morning, and now that she sees the posters that we're sending, she starts — she said that she changed her mind, and now she loves that blue, she loves that star, and she loves that flag, talking about the Israeli flag, and she wished that we'd meet and come to visit one another, and just a few days after I posted the first poster.

5:28 The day after, Iranians started to respond with their own posters. They have graphic designers. What? (Laughter) Crazy, crazy. So you can see they are still shy, they don't want to show their faces, but they want to spread the message. They want to respond. They want to say the same thing. So. And now it's communication. It's a two-way story. It's Israelis and Iranians sending the same message, one to each other.

5:55 ("My Israeli Friends. I don't hate you. I don't want War.")

5:57 This never happened before, and this is two people supposed to be enemies, we're on the verge of a war, and suddenly people on Facebook are starting to say, "I like this guy. I love those guys." And it became really big at some point.

6:15 And then it became news. Because when you're seeing the Middle East, you see only the bad news. And suddenly, there is something that was happening that was good news. So the guys on the news, they say, "Okay, let's talk about this." And they just came, and it was so much,

6:33 I remember one day, Michal, she was talking with the journalist, and she was asking him, "Who's gonna see the show?" And he said, "Everybody."

6:42 So she said, "Everybody in Palestine, in where? Israel? Who is everybody?" "Everybody."

6:50 They said, "Syria?" "Syria."

6:52 "Lebanon?" "Lebanon." At some point, he just said, "40 million people are going to see you today. It's everybody." The Chinese. And we were just at the beginning of the story.

7:06 Something crazy also happened. Every time a country started talking about it, like Germany, America, wherever, a page on Facebook popped up with the same logo with the same stories, so at the beginning we had "Iran-Loves-Israel," which is an Iranian sitting in Tehran, saying, "Okay, Israel loves Iran? I give you Iran-Loves-Israel." You have Palestine-Loves-Israel. You have Lebanon that just — a few days ago. And this whole list of pages on Facebook dedicated to the same message, to people sending their love, one to each other.

7:48 The moment I really understood that something was happening, a friend of mine told me, "Google the word 'Israel.'" And those were the first images on those days that popped up from Google when you were typing, "Israel" or "Iran." We really changed how people see the Middle East. Because you're not in the Middle East. You're somewhere over there, and then you want to see the Middle East, so you go on Google and you say, "Israel," and they give you the bad stuff. And for a few days you got those images. Today the Israel-Loves-Iran page is this number, 80,831, and two million people last week went on the page and shared, liked, I don't know, commented on one of the photos.

8:35 So for five months now, that's what we are doing, me, Michal, a few of my friends, are just making images. We're showing a new reality by just making images because that's how the world perceives us. They see images of us, and they see bad images. So we're working on making good images. End of story.

9:00 Look at this one. This is the Iran-Loves-Israel page. This is not the Israel-Loves-Iran. This is not my page. This is a guy in Tehran on the day of remembrance of the Israeli fallen soldier putting an image of an Israeli soldier on his page. This is the enemy. What?

9:22 ("Our heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their dearests in terror attack in Bulgaria")

9:24 And it's going both ways. It's like, we are showing respect, one to each other. And we're understanding. And you show compassion. And you become friends. And at some point, you become friends on Facebook, and you become friends in life. You can go and travel and meet people. And I was in Munich a few weeks ago. I went there to open an exposition about Iran and I met there with people from the page that told me, "Okay, you're going to be in Europe, I'm coming. I'm coming from France, from Holland, from Germany," of course, and from Israel people came, and we just met there for the first time in real life. I met with people that are supposed to be my enemies for the first time. And we just shake hands, and have a coffee and a nice discussion, and we talk about food and basketball. And that was the end of it. Remember that image from the beginning? At some point we met in real life, and we became friends.

10:35 And it goes the other way around. Some girl that we met on Facebook never been in Israel, born and raised in Iran, lives in Germany, afraid of Israelis because of what she knows about us, decides after a few months of talking on the Internet with some Israelis to come to Israel, and she gets on the plane and arrives at Ben Gurion and says, "Okay, not that big a deal."

11:06 So a few weeks ago, the stress is getting higher, so we start this new campaign called "Not ready to die in your war." I mean, it's plus/minus the same message, but we wanted really to add some aggressivity to it. And again, something amazing happened, something that we didn't have on the first wave of the campaign. Now people from Iran, the same ones who were shy at the first campaign and just sent, you know, their foot and half their faces, now they're sending their faces, and they're saying, "Okay, no problem, we're into it. We are with you." Just read where those guys are from. And for every guy from Israel, you've got someone from Iran. Just people sending their pictures. Crazy, yes?

12:28 So — (Applause)

12:39 So you may ask yourself, who is this dude?

12:46 My name is Ronny Edry, and I'm 41, I'm an Israeli, I'm a father of two, I'm a husband, and I'm a graphic designer. I'm teaching graphic design. And I'm not that naive, because a lot of the time I've been asked, many times I've been asked, "Yeah, but, this is really naive, sending flowers over, I mean — "

13:09 I was in the army. I was in the paratroopers for three years, and I know how it looks from the ground. I know how it can look really bad. So to me, this is the courageous thing to do, to try to reach the other side before it's too late, because when it's going to be too late, it's going to be too late. And sometimes war is inevitable, sometimes, but maybe [with] effort, we can avoid it. Maybe as people, because especially in Israel, we're in a democracy. We have the freedom of speech, and maybe that little thing can change something. And really, we can be our own ambassadors. We can just send a message and hope for the best.

14:01 So I want to ask Michal, my wife, to come with me on the stage just to make with you one image, because it's all about images. And maybe that image will help us change something. Just raise that. Exactly. And I'm just going to take a picture of it, and I'm just going to post it on Facebook with kind of "Israelis for peace" or something.

14:31 Oh my God. Don't cry.

14:36 Thank you guys. (Applause)