

## **MARKETING SOCIETY AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2013**

**Category:** Not-For-Profit Marketing

**Brand:** The Peres Centre for Peace

**Campaign:** Blood Relations – the Israeli-Palestinian Mutual Blood Donation Project

**Agency:** Saatchi & Saatchi Israel

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** *Word count: 299*

## **Blood Relations – the Israeli-Palestinian Mutual Blood Donation Project**

To get Israelis and Palestinians who had lost loved ones in the conflict to voluntarily donate their blood to one another, in a powerful gesture of reconciliation and hope.

The insight behind Blood Relations can be summarized in a single question:

*"Could you hurt someone who has your blood running through their veins?"*

The question helps us to see the conflict from an entirely new perspective – one based on commonality, not difference. By sharing our blood, we can create a physical union, an unbreakable bond, between people otherwise poles apart. Only such a bold, audacious step could succeed in breaking through the cynicism and despondency that has colored how each side has come to view the other. Blood Relations targeted the hearts and minds of a local, a regional and a global audience.

In order to overcome the many cultural, linguistic and semantic barriers we faced in engaging such a diverse audience, we chose the one thing that unites and talks to all people: the blood that runs through all our veins.

Blood was both the message of the campaign, and the 'media' used to deliver the message of reconciliation and hope.

The idea of 'sharing blood instead of spilling blood' would be immediately understood by all audiences and cultures.

The newsworthiness of the Blood Relations story was also a key strategic consideration, as it was critical to the success of our PR efforts to disseminate the campaign message to a global audience. We would be competing for media coverage with the hundreds of news items coming from the Middle East. Our strategy was to use the mutual blood donation concept and the universal human message it delivered to provide media outlets with a refreshingly up-beat and inspiring Middle East story.

**MAIN PAPER:** *Word count: 1998*

## **From Cannes to the White House – how a creative initiative became a global blueprint for reconciliation**

*"Could you hurt someone who has your blood running through their veins?"*

UN Headquarters, New York City, 21st September 2011. In the United Nations Assembly, a stormy debate was raging about the future of Palestinian statehood. On the street outside, and in capital cities and university campuses around the world, noisy demonstrations for and against the motion were in full swing.

A few days before, 4,000 kilometers away, an incredible scene was unfolding at the Sheba Hospital in Israel. A group of Israelis and Palestinians, all of whom had lost loved ones to the conflict, lay side-by-side, some hand-in-hand, as tubes connected to their arms drew blood meant for distribution to hospitals on 'the other side'. Those with the most reason to hate had been brought together through a powerful act of human bonding.

The Blood Relations project, which won the prestigious United Nations Gold UNDP Award earlier this year, provided a catalyst for a new dialogue in the Middle East by demonstrating two peoples' shared humanity through the common bond of blood.

This powerful message has inspired millions around the world and has won the active engagement of the most hard-to-reach world leaders.

The project had three strategic aims:

### **1. Bring Israelis and Palestinians closer together**

By the spring of 2011, the Israelis and the Palestinians had drifted dangerously apart. The previous 20 years of political negotiations had left in its wake a long list of broken agreements and dashed hopes, periodically interrupted by violence and conflict.

Ordinary Israelis and Palestinians had become so tied up with their respective narratives that the prospect of finding common ground between the two communities seemed a distant dream.

We made this dream – to bring people from both sides closer together – our primary campaign objective.

### **2. Actively engage world leaders**

The active involvement of the world's top policy makers was the key to bringing the vision of Blood Relations to reality. But engaging the most hard-to-reach leaders is not an easy task. Every day they are bombarded with dozens of non-profit initiatives from around the world, including many from the Middle East, all vying for their attention.

Our campaign would need to stand out with a simple yet emotionally impactful message. And the more universally applicable the idea, the greater chance the project had of actively engaging with global leaders.

### **3. Provide world leaders with a new tool for reconciliation**

With dozens of conflicts happening around the world at any time, reconciliation remains at the top of the agenda of world leaders, governments and global organizations. The problem is that the conventional route to solving conflicts through political and diplomatic negotiations, often get mired down in ideology, historical grievance and domestic politics. The voices of ordinary people are rarely heard.

We wanted to bypass politics and provide global leaders with a powerful new tool for reconciliation, one based on universal human bond that unites all people.

The campaign took place across various media channels:

#### **Events**

The headline event of the Blood Relations project was the mutual blood donation that took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> September between bereaved Israelis and Palestinians, all of whom had lost loved ones in the conflict. The donations were shared by Israeli hospitals through the Israeli Blood Bank and Magen David Adom, and by the Al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital for Palestinians in East Jerusalem. The event was timed to coincide with the run-up to the UN Assembly vote on Palestinian statehood a week later.

#### **Consumer involvement**

A second, 2-day public blood donation event took place at the Cinemathèque complex in Tel Aviv on the 18<sup>th</sup> September, UN Peace Day. Dedicated street teams gave out Blood Relations-branded merchandise and certificates of appreciation to donors.

Starting in November 2011, a series of international blood donation events took place. This included a high-profile event in London between Jewish and Muslim students in the presence of the Israeli Ambassador H.E. Daniel Taub and other senior officials.

#### **Digital**

A dedicated minisite was launched to enable people from around the world to make virtual blood donations. Donations made on the site were posted to donors' facebook pages to maximize exposure and drive more traffic.

#### **Promo**

At the Cinemathèque blood donation event, dedicated promo street teams engaged with members of the public, gave out Blood Relations-branded merchandise and certificates of appreciation to donors.

A few months later, at the prestigious Doha Debates in Dubai, flyers were handed out to attendees containing a QR code that directed users to the Blood Relations minisite where they could make a virtual blood donation.

#### **Exhibitions and conferences**

An exhibition of the Blood Relations concept was shown at the Cannes Festival in June 2011.

Representatives of the Blood Relations team shared the campaign with participants at the Doha Debates and at universities and seminars around the world.

## **Cinema**

An 8 minute documentary film was made about the initial blood donation, and was sent to film festivals around the world. Three festivals have already screened the film and more are scheduled to screen it in 2012. The film was also shared on YouTube, facebook and leading creative website

The target audience for the campaign consisted of three groups:

### **1. World leaders and decision-makers**

These are the individuals and the institutions that possess the political muscle to effect real and meaningful change in the Middle East. While the immediate objective of the Blood Relations activity - the mutual blood donations - was aimed at bringing Israelis and Palestinians closer together, the ultimate strategic objective of the campaign was to use the coming together of the two communities as a demonstration to world leaders of what can be achieved when human empathy is brought to life by creative thinking. We hoped to inspire them and the governments and institutions they represent to consider non-political approaches to building peace in the region and beyond.

### **2. Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank**

This is the target audience most directly affected by the conflict and their engagement was key to the success of the project. For maximum effect, we targeted Israelis and Palestinians who had paid the heaviest personal price as a result of the conflict – the loss of a loved one. In partnership with the Parents Circle, we secured the involvement of some very brave and inspiring individuals from both communities.

### **3. Jews and Muslims and other stakeholders located outside Israel, Gaza and the West Bank**

Blood Relations aimed to provide a catalyst for a new and a positive dialogue in the region by demonstrating the two sides' shared humanity – bringing the Israeli and Palestinian communities closer together through a sense of common purpose and destiny.

The strategy comprised 3 phases:

#### **Step 1 – Pre-donation: Seeding the story**

Work began in the weeks leading up to the first blood donation on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011, UN Peace Day. News and features editors at leading outlets, such as the BBC, NBC, and Rai Italia, and wire services Reuters and AP, were pitched with the story of the planned event. A lot of media space had been earmarked for special coverage of the UN Assembly vote on Palestinian statehood, and we believed that the Blood Relations story would interest editors as a relevant and newsworthy feature item to cover at the time. Exclusivity clauses were signed with certain outlets to ensure high profile exposure for the story. A number of magazines, such as Vanity Fair, also covered the story.

#### **Step 2 – Post-donation: Spreading the story**

An 8-minute documentary film was made about the first blood donation event, which was used as compelling content to help spread the story further afield. The film was posted on leading creative websites and was submitted to and screened at various film festivals around the world.

### **Step 3 – Promoting the project as global blueprint**

Working through diplomatic channels, we brought Blood Relations to the attention of the office of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as well as the US Congress. We also succeeded in engaging the UN, which gave the project the Gold UNDP award, and which is now talking about developing the project concept as a potential blueprint for reconciliation elsewhere in the world.

Any initiative that dares to challenge the status quo in the Middle East carries with it an element of risk, and Blood Relations was no exception. Our main concern was that the media and other parties would misinterpret the project as a naive attempt at a political solution to the conflict, or would intentionally try to politicize the apolitical, human message of the Blood Relations story.

We addressed these concerns by constantly emphasizing in our communications that the aim of the project was not to find a political solution, but rather to bring people close together through a symbolic act of human bonding.

The campaign won the backing of the office of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the US Congress. Mrs. Clinton's office presented the project to key heads of UN missions, and is continues to work with the Blood Relations team to engage the physical participation of the world's policy makers.

Blood Relations won the Gold UNDP award from the United Nations, the first Israeli body ever to have been given this honour.

In Israel, Blood Relations was covered by Channel 2 News, reaching a staggering rating of 24% (1,632,000 people - 24% of the population).

International media outlets like NBC, BBC, Reuters, AP and Vanity Fair shared the story with more than 350 million people across the world.

The documentary film made was sent to film festivals around the world. Three festivals have already screened the film and more are scheduled to screen it in 2012.

Thousands of people from around the world who were not able to physically donate blood made a virtual donation online and shared the message on facebook.

International blood donation events took place, including a high profile event in London attended by Israeli Ambassador H.E. Daniel Taub.

The campaign met all of the objectives it set out to achieve:

#### **1. Bring Israelis and Palestinians closer together**

We succeeded in bringing together those Israelis and Palestinians with the most reason to hate – who had lost loved ones in the conflict – and convinced them to share blood instead of spilling it. No other non-profit campaign had ever brought two such extremes together in such an inspiring and emotionally impactful action. These powerful images were shared with hundreds of millions of people in the region and around the world, delivering the message that if these individuals could find reconciliation and hope where there was once despair, anyone anywhere could.

#### **2. Actively engage world leaders**

We succeeded not only in grabbing the attention of the most hard-to-reach people in the US Administration, the US Congress and the UN, but also in winning their active participation in the project.

### **3. Provide world leaders with a new tool for reconciliation**

Though we have yet to see the practical implementation of this goal, we have won the backing of the UN, whose global mandate makes puts it in the best position to reapply the Blood Relations concept in other conflict zones to and to encourage world leaders to do likewise.

Blood Relations succeeded not only in grabbing the attention of the world's most powerful leaders and organizations but also in engaging them actively in the project – something few grassroots campaigns have ever managed to do. The significance of this achievement cannot be overstated – especially given the small budget assigned to the project and the total lack of paid-for media spend. The project demonstrated in a few months what statesmen have failed to grasp in decades of political discussions: the awesome ability of creativity to bring people closer, even in the most unlikely situations. But perhaps the most significant aspect of the project's success is yet to come – the realization of Blood Relations as a blueprint for reconciliation in other conflict zones around the world.



The Israeli-Palestinian Blood Donation Project  
[WWW.BLOODRELATIONS.ORG](http://WWW.BLOODRELATIONS.ORG)

In collaboration with:



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# BLOOD RELATIONS

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BLOODRELATIONS

# Thank You

We would like to thank you for supporting the Israeli-Palestinian mutual blood donation project. Your donation offers a sign of hope and inspiration to millions of people in your country and all around the world.

"Could you hurt someone who has your blood running through their veins?"

The Blood Relations team

In collaboration with:

