

# Ran Bar-Yoshafat

## 2012 StandWithUs Shaliach (Israeli representative)



My name is Ran Bar-Yoshafat. I am a young Israeli with a passion for education and advocacy, and I have summarized my background below to give you a better sense of me and my experiences.

I will be in Seattle until June 2012, giving talks in classrooms, lecture halls, informal venues and civic organizations. I have volunteered my time to come here because I believe that the most meaningful way for people to learn about new cultures and peoples is to experience them firsthand. My main activity in Seattle is to discuss the State of Israel, what life there is like, and to discuss and answer questions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My goal is to educate while providing a space for genuine dialogue. I am available to speak, at no charge, to groups of any size.

### My Background

I grew up in Ramat HaSharon, a coastal city just north of Tel Aviv. I am 28 and the youngest of four boys. In high school I was an honors high school student and was in a special program that focused on computer engineering. I was also very active in sports, and I was the 1999 and 2000 Israeli national champion for mixed martial arts (a combination of including karate, boxing, muay thai and Brazilian jiu-jitsu). I received my black belt right after I finished high school. At that time, like most kids, my chief concerns were going to the movies, listening to music, going to the beach, and simply hanging out with my friends.

But unlike the high school experience here, when I was in high school the 2<sup>nd</sup> intifada began. This was a wave of terror against Israel that lasted from 2000 to 2005. There were so many suicide bombers blowing up buses and stores that it meant risking your life just to board a regular city bus. My classmates and I walked to school instead of taking the bus. We didn't go to the movies unless someone could drive us, and lived in constant tension. You always had to be attentive to your surroundings, watch out for abandoned bags in restaurants and malls, and live in fear that this would be the week that you or someone you knew would get killed in a terror attack.

### Army service



Like nearly all Israelis, male or female, I began my army service as soon as I finished high school, at age seventeen. I served in an elite Special Forces unit, the Maglan. I was a hand-to-hand combat expert, and my job was to capture terrorists. I was in the heat of the action for my active service, and had many interesting experiences. My last position was as a drill sergeant for the Maglan Duvdevan platoon. I still serve in the army reserves for one to two months every year, either in training or in combat. My first army reserve service took place during the Second Lebanon war. I was sent to Debel and Rashef, deep in Lebanese territory. I willingly continue to serve in the Israel Defense Force reserves because I understand that it is crucial for my country's survival.

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### Student life



I received a law degree from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. During my studies, I was selected for the StandWithUs Israeli Fellowship program (one of the most prestigious university fellowship programs in Israel) where I learned a great deal about how Israel is perceived around the world and received tools to deal with the problems Israel is facing. I was also very active initiating, planning and organizing events all across Israel. These projects



ranged in size from 10 to 1,000 participants, with the activities including helping people with disabilities, doing environmental cleanup work, renovating low-income homes and more. I am currently studying for an MBA from Tel Aviv University. I am also an active member of the world Jewish Diplomatic Corps, and on the board of the IMPACT! Alumni club – a branch of Friends of the Israel Defense Forces that gives scholarships to low-income ex-soldiers.

### Work experience

While I was a law student, I taught prep classes for the PET, the Israeli university entrance exam. In addition to teaching, I managed the staff of 15 instructors who made up the Jerusalem district. My main focus was to help minorities such as Ethiopian Jews, people with learning disabilities, and the ultra-Orthodox to pass the exam so that they could enroll in a university, obtain a higher education, join the Israeli workforce and have a better future.



I also worked as a mediator, teaching negotiation and alternative dispute resolution to high school students in Israel.



My law residency was in the legal department of the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset. I was counsel to a number of committees, including the the Education, Culture and Sports Committee, the House Committee and the Childcare Committee. I know most of the legislators and can talk about the process and politics of the Knesset.

For the past four years I have worked freelance for MASA, an umbrella organization for most long-term programs in Israel, for which I give lectures about Israel's political and security issues, and teach leadership courses.

### Objective

My goal is to reach out to as many people as possible during my time here and perhaps help them gain new perspective about the wonderful state of Israel. Hope to see you soon!

Ran Bar-Yoshafat