

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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Post-Paramount sale, Shari Redstone is 'full speed ahead' on addressing antisemitism

The media mogul told JI she's excited to show the world a different view of Israel through the Sipur production company, which she joined as chair

By Matthew Kassel

Shari Redstone, 71, has been busier than she had expected after selling Paramount, where she served as chair, to Skydance Media in a widely scrutinized merger this summer.

The Jewish media mogul recently joined the Israeli entertainment studio Sipur as chair, and in leading the Redstone Family Foundation, she is involved in a range of projects fostering cultural ties between the Black and Jewish communities and combating the rise in antisemitism, among other initiatives.

Her current efforts underscore what she describes as a renewed commitment to fighting antisemitism and supporting Israel in the wake of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, an event she cites as accelerating her decision to finally agree to offload Paramount in an \$8 billion deal with Skydance, the Hollywood studio led by David Ellison.

"It took on a new energy for me, and a

new desire to really be supportive of Israel in every way I can," Redstone said of her thinking in an interview with *Jewish Insider* on Friday. "I just want to be part of that community, because it is so important to the future of Judaism, and so important as a core way, ultimately, to fight antisemitism and to bring people together."

As she embarks on her new ventures, Redstone said she hopes to promote content to counter what she views as an inordinately negative focus on Israel in the media and entertainment industries — an issue she highlighted at CBS News in her final months at Paramount, when she had criticized the company's handling of its coverage relating to the war in Gaza.

Before the merger with Skydance, Paramount had settled a \$16 million lawsuit with President Donald Trump over his claim that "60 Minutes," CBS News' flagship program, had tried to influence the results

of the election by selectively editing a comment in an interview with former Vice President Kamala Harris about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

With the sale and lawsuit behind her, Redstone says she is now "very encouraged" by the direction of CBS under Ellison, praising Paramount's recent decision to publicly denounce a Hollywood boycott of the Israeli film industry. "It's really nice to have people use their voices and their platforms and not be afraid and just do the right thing," she told JI. "I hope that more people can stand up to that standard, because it isn't always easy."

She was somewhat more oblique, meanwhile, in addressing ABC's decision last week to suspend the late-night TV host Jimmy Kimmel over his comments on Charlie Kirk's assassination, and the Trump administration's role in pressuring the company to take him off the air. (Kimmel

returned to his show Tuesday night, though TV station owners Sinclair and Nexstar are still refusing to air his show on their ABC affiliates.)

“I don’t know what went into ABC’s decision,” she said. “I just know that we’re living in a world right now that’s very divisive, and those of us who have platforms really need to use it to try to unite people and not just divide people.”

In the interview with **JJ**, Redstone discussed her plans at Sipur and elsewhere, shared her thoughts on the broader news ecosystem and weighed in on Trump’s heightened efforts to silence his critics in the media industry, among other issues.

The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Jewish Insider: You’ve suggested that your decision to leave Paramount and to sell the business was in many ways fueled by an increased desire in the wake of Oct. 7 to work more on fighting antisemitism and supporting Israel. Can you elaborate on your thinking there and what particular issues or causes you’re hoping to focus on now?

Shari Redstone: Oct. 7 impacted me and made me want to get more engaged than I had ever been before. It just really accelerated my desire to be able to focus on the issues that were so important here and around the world. I made a trip to Israel in January, right after Oct. 7, and that was really what changed everything for me. The first stop was the Nova music festival [site], and just being there made me realize that this is what I needed to do, and I haven’t looked back. I’m really excited about being able to spend more time and resources addressing the issues of antisemitism and hate.

I already had a bunch of programs that I was working on, including a program I did at the Y with children aged 4 to 5 to really appreciate different cultures, and it uses books, activities and family events to introduce kids to various cultures with a focus really on fighting antisemitism. But we can’t fight antisemitism unless we really give individuals, especially kids, an understanding of all cultures and differences that exist, and how to address those differences. So I had a lot of programs

going, but now I’m just full speed ahead and super excited.

JJ: Is that work through your foundation?

SR: It’s mostly for my foundation. The main mission there is to empower individuals and communities by using education, film media to create opportunities for open, civil dialogue and to really promote cross-cultural understanding. I did a program at the Jewish Museum in New York with a Black artist who was significantly influenced by a Jewish artist. As part of our Film Impact Series, we did two films, including “From Swastika to Jim Crow,” which talked about the Jewish-Black relationship when [Jewish academics] came here after the war, and nobody would take them in, except for the HBCUs.

I’m now focusing on a movie called “Shared Legacies,” which is about the historic relationship of the Black and Jewish communities, especially during the Civil Rights Movement. I really find that if we can bridge the gap and bring different communities together, and we can be each other’s advocates, that’s a lot stronger than being our own advocates — and that’s one of the reasons why so much of my programming is around cross-cultural education.

JJ: Are there any new or upcoming initiatives that you’re looking forward to working on through the foundation?

SR: For the Film Impact Series, we’re actually going to Washington to do a screening at the Library of Congress, where we’re bringing together Black and Jewish leaders, both in Congress and outside of Congress, to screen the film and to have a dinner. I’m very excited about that. One of the things I try to do is not do one-off programming, to try to build a community and continue to bring them back.

Another other thing I’m super excited about is my program at the Y. We’re now expanding that program from one Y to 13 Ys, and we’re not only working with the children — we’re working with teenagers, parents and families to really create a community around these issues. One of the things I’ve found is if you want to do a program with

the children, you need to engage with the family. It needs to be part of their life, not just one great day of fun or learning.

JJ: On top of that, you recently joined Sipur as chair. Can you talk about what you’re expecting to do there now, and why you chose to join this particular studio?

SR: I have to start by saying I was absolutely not looking for another business opportunity. But the reality is, I worked with Emilio Schenker, who’s the CEO of Sipur, and his team on bringing the movie “We Will Dance Again” to Paramount. During that time, I just got to know him and his team and his supporters, and I love his vision of being the first international studio based in Israel. He has a great business model, great team, great content. I love it, because so much of our time is spent on dealing with more of the controversial issues that involve Israel, so for me, it’s very consistent with the work I’m doing in my foundation.

Hopefully we can present a larger view of Israel. We can present the successes of Israel. We can have positive stories of Israel. Right now, they’re doing a project in Argentina with one of the top singers in Israel, Noa Kirel. It’s going to be a telenovela for the Latin American market. We’re doing another TV series I’m very excited about in Australia. We’re doing a great series in Israel. We’re really getting visibility for a different side of Israel, which I think is really important. It’s very consistent both with a great business and with trying to have an impact, because so much of what we do is about promoting cross-cultural understanding and relationships and proactivity, and I think what Sipur is doing is going to further that cause.

JJ: You mentioned that it’s nice to focus on less controversial issues related to Israel, but it seems difficult to avoid controversy even with a political projects given the pitched debate in Hollywood over Israel and the mounting boycotts and other issues we’ve seen at recent film festivals in Venice and Toronto. What do you make of that dynamic and how do you feel like you can address it in your new position?

SR: I want to start by saying I always address that issue, because I think if we don't use our voices and our platforms to advocate for what we think is important, then we really fail at what our core mission is. I honestly am concerned about the boycott. I think people do not always have the right information to make the decisions that they make. But I also feel that one of my jobs now in creating content for Israel, in working with Sipur, is to provide these opportunities for these relationships to continue. I do not believe a boycott is the answer, and as we found on college campuses, so many people get involved in activities and boycotts and protests without even really understanding what the issues are. Hopefully this will lead to better education for everyone. That was an issue I had at the news as well. People need to be educated. They need to understand the facts before they go out and make statements and take actions. So, quick answer, I don't like it. Longer answer, I'm going to do everything I can to both change it and to fight the narrative.

JJ: Can you talk more about your connection to Israel and how it developed over time? When did you first visit?

SR: I was in Israel years and years ago. My kids studied there, and Israel was always important. But after Oct. 7, it was the first time I thought about what my life would be without Israel, and how in so many ways, we've taken for granted the existence of Israel and everything that they do, frankly, for peace in the Middle East. You know, to give Jews a place that they know they will always have a home, which has become even more important in the past several months. It took on a new energy for me, and a new desire to really be supportive of Israel in every way I can.

I think all of us — Jews, non-Jews — we take certain things for granted, and that kind of taught me, don't take anything for granted. That's why I'm just so excited to double down on my work in Israel, to spend more time there, to work with Sipur, to work with the survivors of the Nova music festival. I've worked with lone soldiers. I've worked with the IDF. And I just want to be part of that community, because it is so

important to the future of Judaism, and so important as a core way, ultimately, to fight antisemitism and to bring people together.

There's never enough stories told about how, where else do you have Jews and Arabs working together in the government? Nobody talks about all of the things that Israel does to try to provide a very positive existence for the Arabs living in Israel. Nobody did too much for them in Gaza for the last 15 years.

JJ: Have you yourself faced antisemitism?

SR: You know, we all have. I'm not going to go into it, but, yeah.

JJ: You took issue with CBS' handling of some Israel issues while you were at Paramount, including a '60 Minutes' segment that drew almost exclusively on interviews with former officials who resigned from the State Department in protest of the Biden administration's support for Israel. What are your thoughts on the mainstream media's coverage of Israel at the moment? Do you feel that it's become skewed against Israel amid the war in Gaza, and if so, why do you think that's the case?

SR: Look, antisemitism has existed in this country and around the world for a very long time. I think what happened after Oct. 7 was boiling up. I don't think it suddenly became an issue, and I think the issues that I try to address go back to what I said: Educate people, give them the facts. I think media and news in particular needs to be more balanced. We need to have fact-based reporting that enables people to understand the bigger picture, the context. That's what I advocate for, more education, more balance, for differentiation between opinions and facts.

I think right now, it's very difficult for audiences to distinguish between facts and the opinions given by journalists, and I think we need to do a better job of that. And by the way, people are entitled to their opinions. If you're a news broadcaster, you need to present a diversity of opinions, and people now are using their opinions as if they're the facts, so I think we need to do a better job of just fact reporting, educating people and having more balance.

JJ: Are there any positive examples of media companies upholding those values you'd like to point to?

SR: I can't speak to what goes on in other companies. I know, while I was at CBS, we ultimately did bring somebody on to deal with standards, to have more checks and balances and accountability. From what I understand, I think that is continuing.

JJ: That would be Susan Zirinsky you're referring to? You praised the decision to hire her as interim executive director of CBS News last January.

SR: Yeah, Susan. When she was brought in, I felt it takes too long for the right things to happen, but I thought that was a really good move. I think we're going to have to wait and see. But I think it's very hard because it's very ingrained, and people's opinions are based a lot on misinformation and not understanding the context. And that's true for all of us when it comes to many issues. So we have to take a step back from what we think and what we believe and what we feel and really educate ourselves and see whether or not that is going to impact the positions that we're taking.

JJ: Are you encouraged by the direction that David Ellison is taking at CBS, including reports he could acquire The Free Press and install Bari Weiss in a senior editorial role there?

SR: I just want to say I'm very encouraged by the fact that he's trying to provide more fair and balanced news, from what I can read from the outside. And frankly, I don't read it, but I'm told about it. But I'm very encouraged by that. He brought in somebody else, Ken Weinstein, to focus on standards and accountability. And I think if it goes through with Bari, she's certainly a voice that's different than the voices that have appeared on air and through the company over the last couple of years. So I think he's definitely going in the right direction. They came out against the boycott. It's really nice to have people use their voices and their platforms and not be afraid and just do the right thing. I hope that more people can stand up to that standard, because it isn't always easy.

JJ: What was your impression of mainstream news coverage of Israel before the Oct. 7 attacks?

SR: I think the coverage of politics, the coverage of Israel, the coverage of a lot of topics, has become unfair and unbalanced, not to quote somebody who talks about the opposite, and I think that we haven't even realized that trend taking place. I think it took place in society, it took place on the news. And I think the issue of media bias is something that we need to be very conscious of. I do believe it existed a long time before Oct. 7. Things can't just happen overnight. They're brewing, and I think as the world has changed, as people's politics have changed, it's gotten much more divisive. I think that comes across in the news and other media.

JJ: With regard to ABC's decision to suspend Jimmy Kimmel's show, you said at the Axios Media Trends conference this week, 'Not because of Trump or because of any other reasons, but I do think we all need to be thoughtful of the content we are putting on air given the division that exists in this country.' Do you want to elaborate on that point?

SR: I don't know what went into ABC's decision. I just know that we're living in a world right now that's very divisive, and those of us who have platforms really need to use it to try to unite people and not just divide people. And that doesn't mean you don't have a broad array of opinions, and people can't express them. But it goes back to what I said: a broad array of opinions, and trying, as hard as it may be, to get

people to agree on the facts. It is often very difficult for people consuming media to understand, when somebody's talking, is this their opinion or is this their fact? Because they speak with such authority that you sometimes don't realize, 'Wow, this is just their opinion.' And I think that's part of the problem.

JJ: How, in your view, does that apply to Israel?

SR: I was involved with this conference in D.C. a couple of weeks ago, and somebody made a comment about how Israel is like .02% of the population [Ed. note: As of 2025, Israel makes up approximately .12% of the world population], but 60% of the coverage. And why isn't anybody talking what's going in Africa and other places where there really is genocide? Why is it that everybody chooses to focus on Israel and always make it a target? That, again, is one of the reasons why I'm so excited to work with people to try to change the conversation, to try to show all of the ways in which Jews and Arabs live together in Israel in a very positive way.

JJ: Are there any other areas where you're working to address this problem?

SR: Right now, I'm working a lot with Sipur. I've also started funding the production of content. I'm working with Jonathan Silvers, who's producing a movie on what's going on in Israel now, post-Oct. 7. I'm working with one of the survivors of Nova on a film. And we have a show coming to Broadway. I've got involved a bit with the production of Broadway shows, and

we announced on Tuesday that the play 'Giants,' about the author Roald Dahl's legacy of antisemitism, is coming to Broadway this month. We were involved in the play in London, and I think that's just another opportunity to use media in a positive way.

I've always believed that content leads to conversation that leads to change, so the more content we can create that people can see together cross-culturally and have conversations about, the better off we're going to be able to address these issues and to hopefully bring people together.

JJ: Sounds like an ideal example of engaging in a civic culture.

SR: It's interesting, because I think in many ways, the decline in our democratic institutions is very much tied to the increase of hate and antisemitism. Because you need to be able to have civil discourse, you need to have checks and balances, and you need to have accountability. And we've lost some of that — both in our government, and certainly in media, and certainly in our conversations with others.

JJ: Are you worried about the FCC's more activist role and President Trump's threats to the media?

SR: I worry about everything. But the reality is, if any of their work leads to more fair and balanced coverage of issues and of the world, I think that would be great, because I'm a big believer in free speech, but just remember that hate speech is not free speech. ♦

Shomer Collective launch Shiva Circle initiative to offer ‘life jacket for grievers’

Based on an idea developed and funded by Michael Steinhardt, ‘shiva’ guides to help families navigate, find meaning in Jewish mourning rituals

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

In August 2011, Rose Capin celebrated her bat mitzvah with her beloved grandmother Esther, then 76, beaming from the pews. Less than two years later, her grandmother would be diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Then — it seemed almost in an instant — she was gone.

“I was maybe in middle school,” Capin told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. “I didn’t even know what was happening.” At her grandmother’s *shiva*, “I remember there being a real sense of, ‘Don’t you dare ask a question. This is just what we do.’”

Capin is one of 40 volunteer *shiva* guides trained by the Shomer Collective, a Jewish, end-of-life support organization, that launched its Shiva Circle initiative this past spring in Atlanta. The initiative makes *shiva* practices accessible for Jews who lack the knowledge or connections traditionally provided by local synagogues.

The training taught Capin the tools to “be able to show up for my community and listen and be a project manager for the grief and funeral process.” It allows her to offer the support she wished she had. “The *shiva* practice provides a really beautiful framework of meaning-making. It sounds kind of dark, but it’s like a life jacket for grievers.”

Shiva guides are one aspect of Shiva Circle’s three-pronged approach to support mourners.

The second aspect of support is providing resources, not just for mourners but also for friends and family, such as informational sheets detailing the ins and outs of the ritual. The third aspect is offering tools, such as spreadsheets, PDFs and a digital organizer powered by OneTable that eases the planning of the *shiva*, coordinating everything from who will set up chairs, cover

mirrors, organize parking, care for kids, take out the trash and, even, walk the dog.

“All of the logistics that happen during *shiva* can overwhelm a mourner and prevent them from wanting to sit *shiva*,” Rabbi Melanie Levav, executive director of Shomer Collective, told eJP. “One of the innovations of Shiva Circle is to remove that burden of feeling like ‘I have to host a cocktail party.’”

According to a 2021 Pew study, only 35% of American Jews are synagogue members. “We no longer have a circle of people who come and make *shiva* for us in the way that we might have [had] a generation or two ago,” Levav said. When a patriarch or matriarch passes away, that’s exactly when people are asking, “Who am I Jewishly?” she said.

Today’s mourners “may not know what *shiva* is or how to make it happen,” Levav said. “And if their social circle is multifaith, they may not have people who know how to make *shiva* happen for them. We also see people not showing up for *shiva* in the way that it was once an expectation and understanding that you show up.”

Shiva Circle is not simply targeting the assimilated though, Levav said. Many members of synagogues have negative experiences with the ritual because they feel that their synagogues are not supporting them the way they want.

“*Shiva* belongs to everyone,” Levav said. Not everyone wants to hold a traditional evening prayer service, she said, so the tools and guides allow mourners to plan a *shiva* that is meaningful to them, such as a gathering to share memories of a loved one.

“For those who are intrigued, interested, curious or pretty certain that they want Jewish ritual as part of their mourning, Shiva Circle brings the shul sisterhood of Bubbe’s generation to today’s mourners,” Lindsay Bressman, advisory board chair

of Shomer Collective and a member of the advisory committee for Shiva Circle, told eJP.

To do this, Shiva Circle activates the community that the mourner already has. “What about your buddies from bowling or pickleball or your fantasy football league?” Levav said. “Who are the people who could come and host you in your own home?”

Although the half-day training for *shiva* guides has only been held in Atlanta so far, this winter it will be launched in Boston in-person and online, so guides can serve their communities irrespective of where they live. Volunteer guides range in age from being in their 20s to 90s. Some are Jews of color, LGBTQ and Jews by choice. Many are unaffiliated and others are members of synagogues.

Shiva Circle is already partnered with 30 local Atlanta organizations, including synagogues, Jewish Family and Career Services, the Marcus JCC, Jewish Home Life Communities and Dressler’s Jewish Funeral Care.

The initiative is funded by the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life and several anonymous donors. Michael Steinhardt, whose foundation is in his name, came up with the idea for the initiative and wrote about it in his 2022 book, *Jewish Pride*. He reached out to Shomer Collective to pilot it. Shomer Collective was founded in 2020 through Natan, an organization his son co-founded.

“We want more American Jews to see the power of *shiva*,” David Gedzelman, president and CEO of The Steinhardt Foundation, told eJP. “Stay at home for a week after you’ve lost a close relative. Let us host you in your own home. We’ll arrange it. We’ll bring everybody in... We think that if people have this experience, they’ll realize, ‘Wow, my people are really wise,’ and maybe

they'll do other Jewish things... We want to do for *shiva* what OneTable does for Friday night Shabbat dinner.”

OneTable was an easy choice for a partner as they already had a customizable platform available to plan *shivas*. The group also served as a strong example. Since OneTable's founding in 2014, it has

organized over 170,000 Shabbat dinners. “It felt like a full-circle moment to be able to guide another Jewish organization in increasing their community impact,” MJ Kurs-Lasky, senior director of national partnerships at OneTable, told eJP.

In Atlanta, Dressler's Jewish Funeral Care has begun connecting mourners with

shiva guides. Capin is working with Ma'alot, her home community, which she describes as “a synagogue without walls,” to launch a *chesed* (kindness) committee that can be there for mourners the way she wished people were there for her, so a life jacket is always on hand. ♦

SEPTEMBER 25, 2025

Concern mounts in Jerusalem as Qatar, Egypt set to take key roles in UNESCO

‘It’s bad for Israel and bad for America,’ an Israeli diplomat told JI this week

By Lahav Harkov

Israel is eyeing the upcoming United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization executive board meeting with concern, with Egypt and Qatar poised to take influential roles in the body.

Qatar is set to take the body's chairmanship, and former Egyptian Tourism and Antiquities Minister Khaled el-Enani is considered a leading candidate for the organization's director-general.

UNESCO is focused on international cooperation in education, culture and science and communication. Its most prominent project is its list of World Heritage Sites that members pledge to safeguard and adhere to global norms for preservation. Its annual budget in recent years has been about \$1.5 billion.

The Jewish state has historically faced challenges in UNESCO, which ratified multiple resolutions in the past decade declaring the Temple Mount, Western Wall and the Old City of Jerusalem to be endangered Muslim and Christian sites, while excluding the millenia-old Jewish connection. The “State of Palestine” has been a full member of UNESCO since 2011, and the organization recognizes five Palestinian heritage sites, including the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, a Jewish and Muslim holy site; UNESCO resolutions

relating to Hebron have also left out its Jewish history. In 2009-2014, UNESCO approved 46 resolutions widely viewed as critical of Israel.

Yet, in recent years, with former French Culture Minister Audrey Azoulay at the helm of UNESCO — the first Jewish person to hold the position — the organization managed to lower the temperature over contentious issues in the Middle East, and she pushed for the advancement of Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism. Azoulay will complete her second term in November; the departing chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board is Vera Lacoeuilhe of Saint Lucia.

The UNESCO Executive Board Meeting will begin on Wednesday in Paris and continue for two weeks, during which the new board chairperson and director general will be selected. The director general must receive a majority vote on Oct. 6, while the executive board chairmanship rotates between geographic blocs and the Middle East bloc agreed to put Qatar in the role.

With two Arab countries expected to assume UNESCO's leading positions, some observers have expressed concern that Israel may again face disproportionate scrutiny and criticism — a pattern seen in other U.N. bodies where geopolitical tensions often rise

to the surface.

The Trump administration left UNESCO earlier this year. The first Trump administration departed the organization in 2017, after which the Biden administration returned. Washington is left with little influence to help Israel or push back against decisions it may view as against its own interests.

“It's an odd situation where we have announced we are leaving, so it matters far less to us,” former Trump administration official and Foundation for Defense of Democracies Senior Advisor Rich Goldberg told *Jewish Insider*. “In fact, it reinforces how broken the agency is and why we should be in opposition to it, not in the middle of it.”

The potential new leadership of UNESCO is “bad for Israel and bad for America,” an Israeli diplomat told JI this week.

An Israeli diplomatic source said that it is an “unusual combination to have a director general and chairman of the executive board from Arab countries. It puts Israel at a disadvantage. ... Israel is not a member of the executive board and has no influence on who will be chairman.”

Still, Israel tried to advocate for friendlier candidates in the past year, though the diplomatic source called the effort “somewhat pointless, because they have an

almost automatic majority. There's a bloc of Muslim countries, and those who support Qatar."

Qatari Ambassador to UNESCO Nasser bin Hamad Al Hanzab is a leading candidate to chair UNESCO's Executive Board for the next two years, according to diplomatic sources.

Qatar is one of the largest donors to UNESCO, contributing millions of dollars in the last decade and hosting a regional office in Doha, whose expenses are covered by the Qatar Fund for Development. The Gulf state's Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser is a UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education.

Qatar is also one of the top donors to the U.N., broadly, increasing its contributions since 2020, including pledging over \$1 billion to humanitarian agencies in 2018 and 2020.

"Qatar has the money and the influence," the Israeli diplomatic source said. "It's a game where the result is known in advance. There isn't a lot that can be done."

Goldberg said that "the Qataris have learned from the Chinese how to leverage international organizations for global legitimacy and national interests. We now must come to terms with a U.N. where both the [Chinese Communist Party] and the [Qatar-backed] Muslim Brotherhood seek control of U.N. bodies to advance their interests and undermine America's."

"They've poured billions into cultural and educational influence across the world," he added. "This is a logical U.N. body for Qatar to co-opt."

El-Enani is an archeologist by profession and a professor of Egyptology. During his tenure as Egypt's minister of tourism and antiquities, Cairo put substantial effort and resources into refurbishing its ancient sites, such as Luxor.

A diplomatic source said that Qatar is actively backing el-Enani, who played a role in strengthening the Gulf state's ties with Egypt, after years of tensions between the countries due to Doha's sponsorship of the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Jazeera, which supported the overthrow of the Egyptian government in 2011. Qatar is one of the largest sponsors of the Giza Pyramids UNESCO World Heritage Site project led by el-Enani when he was in government. El-Enani has been featured at events hosted by Qatari embassies around the world in recent years.

Journalists across the Middle East have also accused el-Enani and his campaign of corruption. Doha-based journalist Mohammed Al-Qadusi published a recording that he said was a conversation between Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abd-Elati with Egyptian Ambassador to the Netherlands Emad Hana in which the latter suggested offering a gift to UNESCO executive board members to improve his chances of winning. Egyptian TV anchor Mohammed Naser said in an on-camera monologue that el-Enani represents a "corrupt regime" and had misused public funds, allowed for the destruction of archeological sites and lacked transparency when spending on large events.

Coptic Christians have spoken out against el-Enani's candidacy, saying that Egypt violated UNESCO's rules for World Heritage Sites by declaring a historic monastery property of the state and noted Cairo's systemic discrimination against the minority population, which makes up 12-15% of Egyptians.

El-Enani is running against Firmin Edouard Matoko, a former senior UNESCO official from Congo, and Gabriela Ilian Ramos Patino of Mexico, a former senior

official at UNESCO and the OECD.

The Israeli diplomatic source said that "who the director-general appoints to key roles, such as his deputies and the head of departments will be significant."

He also said it is unclear where el-Enani will stand on Israel-related matters — the options likely being either sympathetic to the Palestinians or seeking to avoid controversy as UNESCO has done in recent years, by watering down Palestinian resolutions' texts so that they do not attack or delegitimize Israel.

But if the Palestinians propose resolutions that are hostile to Israel, "the automatic majority brings them success in almost everything. [Israel is] fighting defensively. ... We aren't abandoning this arena to the Palestinians. We make sure to emphasize with historic documents and archeological findings the Israeli connection to Jerusalem and Hebron," he said.

In addition to advancing education, science and culture, UNESCO protects independent media and press freedom. Despite owning the Al Jazeera media empire, Qatar ranks 79th out of 180 in the World Press Freedom Index, and Egypt ranks 170th and is one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists.

In the coming months, Israel plans to submit proposals to double its current number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 17. The list of 18 new sites includes ancient synagogues in the Upper Galilee and the Carmel Nature Reserve.

Israel also submitted a report to UNESCO earlier this year about damage caused by Iranian missile attacks to Tel Aviv's White City, a World Heritage Site due to its Bauhaus architecture. ♦

Closure of Tampa Jewish campus highlights importance of demographic studies, expert says

'When you're going to open something like a JCC or a synagogue or a day camp or a preschool, and you do it without doing your homework first, you can make a multimillion-dollar mistake,' Jewish demographer Ira Sheskin says

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Last week, the Maureen and Douglas Cohn Jewish Community Campus in Tampa, Fla., announced it would be closing. The announcement cited various reasons for the move: demographic changes, lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a decrease in residents in its assisted-living facility, rising costs for security and damage from recent hurricanes. But according to Ira Sheskin, a leading Jewish demographer, the main culprit may be the community's lack of an up-to-date demographic study.

Tampa is home to two JCCs: the Cohn Campus in the north part of the city and the Shanna and Bryan Glazer JCC in the south. Over 1.5 million people live in Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, but the community hasn't done an in-depth study since 1980.

"The going estimate for Hillsborough County is 30,000 Jews, but who knows?" Sheskin, a professor and the director of the Jewish Demography Project at the University of Miami, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. "They're one of the larger communities in the country" that hasn't done a recent demographic study.

The estimate he is referring to comes from rough figures from rough studies he performed in 1994 and 2010, which showed that between those years, North Tampa nearly halved its Jewish population, while South Tampa's Jewish population more than doubled. (The Shanna and Bryan Glazer JCC opened its doors in 2016, an apparent sign of the increased need for Jewish infrastructure in the area.) Sheskin's estimates included nothing about age, sex, family makeup, ethnic background or other important data that can be used in planning

what services a community needs.

Because of the lack of data and decreasing number of Jews living in North Tampa, the closing of the Cohn Campus "doesn't surprise me," Sheskin said. He cited the example of a Midwestern community that also did a demographic study in 1980 but didn't act on it for 25 years. Relying on the dated study, which had shown a wealth of young families, the community opened a JCC to serve them. It quickly failed; the young families were long gone.

"When you're going to open something like a JCC or a synagogue or a daycamp or a preschool, and you do it without doing your homework first, you can make a multimillion-dollar mistake," he said. For example, he said, another community he worked with hired a single-parent family coordinator without realizing their community was made up of less than 1% single-parent families. That only cost them \$20,000, he said, but for other communities, the losses can be far steeper. All it takes is a passionate board member advocating for major changes without realizing the community has no need for them, he said. Having demographics to point to can negate such mistakes.

The 22-acre North Tampa campus was purchased by the JCC and Federation in 1992 for \$3.25 million and houses many entities: the local Jewish federation, the JCC, a Jewish assisted living facility, a preschool, a Jewish family services and a community foundation.

"The Cohn Campus has been a home where children sang their first Hebrew songs, people of all ages made friends and the community gathered for many kinds of events, programs and celebrations," Gary Gould, CEO of Tampa JCCs and Federation,

wrote in the announcement of the closure published in *The Jewish Press of Tampa Bay*.

But that plethora of institutions was also a drawback, according to Sheskin.

In Florida, many of the retirement communities are predominantly Jewish, he said. "They have Jewish entertainment in the auditorium, and if you want to play mah-jongg, it's right there... A lot of people go to a JCC for the socialization involved with other Jews, and you don't really need to go to the JCC for that reason when you live in a housing development that is a high percentage Jewish. That's a problem for JCCs in Florida overall."

Additionally, having an assisted living facility next to a JCC does not help fill a preschool or summer camp, Sheskin said, adding that Jewish families today aren't willing to travel as far to attend one as past generations were.

Many of the additional costs leading to the closure were out of the Cohn Campus' hands, including damage to its roof and air conditioning system caused by last year's hurricanes and additional security costs post-Oct. 7. Because of recent storms, insurance costs have skyrocketed in Florida as well.

Additionally, the assisted-living facility "has seen a serious decline in its number of residents — a phenomenon consistent with the ALF industry across the country," Gould said.

This is happening at the same time as Florida's 60-plus population surges, with the U.S. Census Bureau estimating the cohort will make up 32% of Florida's population by 2030. Between 2015 and 2024, 820 assisted-living facilities across the U.S. shuttered—though that was mainly caused by Medicaid underfunding and chronic understaffing.

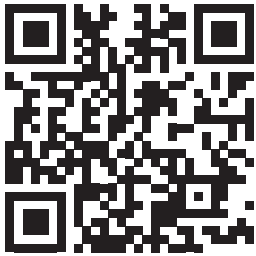
“Keeping the campus open would cost several million dollars,” Gould said. When the board wrestled with what direction to take, closing or launching a fundraising campaign to save the campus, they reached out to the community for feedback, but the results were tepid, leading the board to sell the property to a developer who plans to build multiple-family dwellings on it.

Because of the air conditioning issue, the

assisted living facility — Weinberg Village — is shuttering in November. Faculty will help residents find new housing. The rest of the campus, including the JCC and preschool, will close at the end of May. Both the local Jewish family services and community foundation are seeking new homes. An estimated 92 employees are expected to lose their jobs because of the closure.

“Now is the time to make a necessary

change to ensure a vibrant future for Jewish life in Tampa,” Gould told eJP. “We’re reflecting on all the Cohn Campus has meant to our community over the past nearly three decades. Very few communities of our size have two JCCs, and even fewer have a facility as state-of-the-art as the Shanna and Bryan Glazer JCC, so it’s the responsible decision to allocate our resources strategically.” ♦



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