Shomrim T

The Center for Media and Democracy in Israel



2021 Annual Report

Investigative Journalism in the Public Interest

Launched in December 2019, The Center for Media and Democracy in Israel, Shomrim (the Guardians) is a non profit independent news organization established to strengthen Israeli democracy through investigative journalism. A newsroom free of commercial or political bias, that aims to strengthen the flow of trustworthy fact-based and data-driven information to the public; incubate investigative reporting projects with potential for social impact; highlight new voices; and examine issues of importance to communities that are overlooked. From investigations and documentary projects to data-journalism and photo-journalism, Shomrim tells stories that might otherwise go untold and empower Israelis to participate meaningfully in their democracy.

Inspired by ProPublica, Shomrim is a new player in the local media field. Unlike most media outlets, we are a non-profit dedicated exclusively to investigative reporting. Shomrim's unique model is to conduct independent investigations or in partnership with other media organizations and to publish them in print, broadcast and digital outlets across the entire political spectrum to achieve maximum exposure and impact. Our newsroom employs in-house and freelance journalists who implement the Freedom of Information Law and navigate big open data sources. Shomrim is also laying the foundation for a vibrant investigative journalist community by conducting an annual conference, developing training resources and building strategic relationships with media outlets, schools and civil society organizations.

Highlights of the Year

2021 was a breakthrough year for Shomrim. Our investigative projects, and first and fore most the Pandora Papers Investigation, unarguably positioned Shomrim as an important player in the Israeli media environment. As this report will demonstrate, the distribution partnerships significantly grew, and the national news coverage was testimony to strong agenda-setting influence.

Acting in the public interest, Shomrim produced more than a dozen major investigations examining crucial issues pertaining to police lawlessness, inequalities in the public health system, discrimination against minority groups, prison labor and rehabilitation, privatization of social services, the opioid pandemic and the largely un-scrutinized appointment of legal guardianship. The majority of the stories were picked up by other news organizations and became subject of widespread public discourse, and several sources, who were first interviewed by Shomrim, were invited for follow up interviews focusing public attention to the issues that we uncovered. Most often, our stories dealt with topics that received light or seldom coverage or were never mentioned. Although important, they were pushed to the margins of the media agenda in favor of scandalous news of the moment.

Shomrim's coverage of the Pandora Papers

Investigation - a global investigation into the financial underworld of the global elite led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). Shomrim was the only news organization in Israel to participate in the investigation. Journalists Uri Blau and Daniel Dolev, led by Editor Eyal Avrahamy, spent more than 6 months researching and analyzing the data and uncovering the faces behind the anonymous offshore shell companies. No other media organization in the country could have immersed in such an in-depth, time-

consuming and costly investigation. The stories were released in three waves: the first revealing the offshore connections of Barkat, Ramon and Steinmetz; the second featuring Milchan's offshore fortune; and the third uncovering the names of Israeli billionaires with offshore assets - Teddy Sagi, Idan and Eyal Ofer, Moshe Hogeg and Eitan Stibbe.

Within hours of publication, Shomrim's exposé hit headlines and set the public agenda in Israel. All

media players - major and niche, published Shomrim's findings with full credit, placing due attention to tax avoidance and raising important legal, societal, fiscal and moral issues of pubic interest. Broadcast channels devoted items to tax havens, financial engineering and money laundering, and the legal albeit ethically problematic tax avoidance of political

players, public officials and billionaires. There were follow ups in the radio and news podcasts, and more than 2 million internet users engaged with our findings. Our impact on Israeli media and public conversation was far reaching and awarded us wider recognition, which led to expanding distribution partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships.

Following Shomrim's exposure, the Movement for Quality Government approached the Attorney-General and Police Inspector-General requesting them to investigate if Likud MK Nir Barkat broke the law.



Additionally, Likud MK David Amsalem submitted the 'anti-Barkat' bill designed to limit to 100,000 shekels the amount of money politicians may donate from their own private funds toward their political campaigns. Shomrim will continue to follow up on the measures taken and make sure that the issue does not fall in the public agenda.

EAPC (KATZA) - State-Owned Europe Asia Pipeline Company's Oil Leaks and Extensive Ecological Damage - the series of articles by Daniel Dolev featured in Ynet revealed new information about unreported oil leaks over the years, agreements shrouded in secrecy and misinformation and lack of government oversight and public scrutiny over oil pipeline running from the Red Sea resort of Eilat to the Mediterranean port city of Ashkelon. The articles sparked a heated public debate about the aging pipeline and many media organizations picked up on different angles of the company's mishaps and environmental records. Currently, the government

is assessing the costs and benefits of the new KATZA

deal. Shomrim's findings resonated across civil society

organizations devoted to addressing environmental

challenges and were a resource for an eco-system

investigation, which led to re-examining the agreement

to transport oil from the United Arab Emirates through

Israel to Europe.

Tel Aviv District Court Judge Khaled Kabub's Duty to Disclose Conflict of Interest - a joint investigation by Shomrim and Calcalist uncovered non-disclosure of potentially disqualifying conditions on behalf of Supreme Court Candidate, Judge Khaled Kabub. Although the judge has been friends with attorney Zvika Bar Nathan since law school, and although Bar Nathan represented Kabub in several private matters including the recent Bramley Affair and even spoke on his behalf on Channel 13 investigative show - The Source, Kabub did not disqualify himself from presiding in hearings involving the Goldfarb, Seligman and Co., where Bar-Nathan is Vice Chair, and did not provide due disclosure, in violation of all norms and precedents. Additionally, attorney Boaz Ben Zur, who represented Kabub's son in the Bramley Affair, was also not included in the Judge's recusal list. Following the investigation and request for comment, Kabub added attorneys Bar Nathan and Ben Zur to his conflict list.

The EAPC Leaks: The Writing Was On the Wall









Top Stories of 2021

Policing and the Legal System

Minimal Enforcement of COVID-19 Rules in Haredi Communities - the pandemic exposed police discrimination in the enforcement of state regulations in ultra-Orthodox areas, where the outbreak was disproportionately intense and where there were increasing reports of widespread flouting of restrictions. COVID-19 emphasized the insularity of the Haredi public, who give first priority to their rabbinical leadership over state governance, and when compliance conflicted with communal norms, this 'under the radar' public was in a powerful position to disobey regulations. The state was either unwilling or unable to enforce pandemic regulations on the 1.1 million Haredi citizens, who considered themselves exempt from civil obligations and legal ramifications.

A day of reckoning for ultra-Orthodox leaders?

The COVID-19 mortality rate of ultra-Orthodox Israelis aged 65+ is four times that of the general Jewish population. Will this staggering statistic lead to an internal self-reckoning among the Haredi community and its leaders? **A special Shomrim analysis**



The West Bank Wild West - from the right, Jewish settlers claim excessive force and brutality by police, and from the left, human rights organizations complain that reports to the police about violent attacks against Palestinians and their property in the hands of hilltop youth and Jewish extremists lead to nothing. In the face of raging violence and ideological crime, the police is without sufficient manpower and financial resources and operates under vague divisions of order maintenance between itself, the military and the Israel Security Agency, and according to political interests of power holders.

The No Man's Land of Southern Israel - massive amounts of illegal weapons are making their way into the Negev's Bedouin communities and subjecting residents to violent theft, demands for protection payments and attacks on private property and even military infrastructure. News about failed law enforcement in the Negev rarely reaches headlines unless an inhumane and dreadful event takes place such as the horrific rape of a 10-year-old girl at her home in the middle of the night. Residents of the Negev - Jewish and Bedouin - are increasingly distressed in the face of the escalating crime, which is becoming more audacious, and the total lawlessness.

Little Columbia: How the Negev Turned into a Crime Hothouse with the Aroma of Marijuana

- across the Negev, criminals are making the desert bloom with hundreds of cannabis hothouses, and the money they raise is funding a rampant crime wave in southern Israel. Shomrim joined a Green Patrol operation to document the daily helplessness and

Colombia in Israel: Shomrim exposes the cannabis map of Israel's Wild South

Endless fields of weed: Across the Negev, even in the shadow of some of the largest IDF bases, Bedouin criminals are making the desert bloom with hundreds of cannabis greenhouses – and the money they raise is funding a rampant crime wave in southern Israel. Shomrim joined a Green Patrol operation to document the daily helplessness and powerlessness. **A special Shomrim report**.



powerlessness of law enforcement officials in what has become a state within a state where police cannot combat crime. Despite the consistent destruction of crops, the number of indictments is practically none. It is impossible to gather evidence tying the hothouses to their owners and without conviction or punishment, there is no deterrent effect.

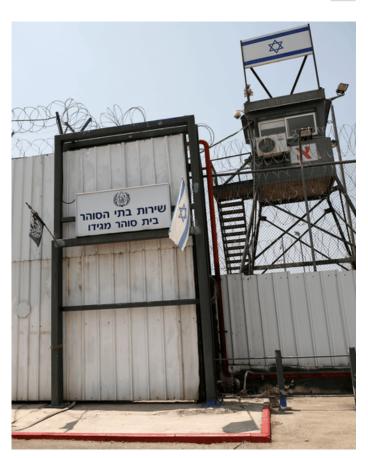
Prisoner Rehabilitation Only for Those with **Means** - a Shomrim inspection revealed that 70% of prisoners are not rehabilitated and released after serving their full sentence because they are unable to receive a rehabilitation plan (which is a mandatory requirement for shortening the prison term). Surprisingly, only 20% receive support services from the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, which operates on a 60 million ILS annual budget. The remaining 10% who have means purchase private rehabilitation plans, which are unsupervised. Thousands of shekels buy them a tailored rehabilitation plan that is submitted to the Parole Board. The bottom line: a prisoner with money can buy his freedom faster and the majority of offenders reenter society without receiving rehabilitation treatment in jail or in the community. It is no wonder that Israel's recidivism rate is over 40%.

are not covered by Israeli Labor Law. Incarcerated workers are employed in 62 factories owned by the Israel Prison Service and private businesses and are subjected to unfair labor practices such as below minimum wage pay, no social benefits, and outputbased compensation.

Forced Conservatorship - every year, thousands of Israelis are denied fundamental rights by the courts. A Shomrim special analysis shows that whereas in 2003, there were only 23,000 legal guardian cases in Israel, today the number tripled to 65,000. Also, in 97% of the cases, court hearings take place without Israel Prison Service Sweatshops - although the presence of the people whose independence employment is a key to rehabilitation, prisoners is taken away. The courts appoint thousands of conservators without meeting with, hearing from, or even informing the person in question. There is a huge group of very vulnerable people who are given no voice in fateful decisions that affect the rest of their lives.







Rulings are made solely based on documents

Prison Canteens are Flourishing - thousands of

inmates pay for basic supplies such as mineral

water bottles, tuna cans, warm undershirts and blankets

free of itch mites. Prisons are not properly heated, the

food is in poor quality and thinly distributed, and there

is often no access to clean and healthy water. While

the Israel Prison Service is obligated by law to provide

water and food in a sufficient amount to maintain the

health of the inmates, they spend a lot of money and

accumulate debt not for the purchase of luxury items

but as a means to survive.

submitted to the judge.

an increasing discussion within Arab society over the role of schools who are the last line of defense before young adults embark on their adult lives. Yet many

and girls slip through their hands, drawn by the promise

graduates cannot pursue tertiary education due to poor educational achievements and thus have no promising employment opportunities, especially if they were born into a family without financial means, which is the case

in more than half of the households. Regretfully, the Arab education system lacks the means to provide at risk students with psychological and social support, and even food security, and to conduct school-based

violence prevention programs.

Illegal Warfare in a Densely Populated Area

- Kfar Bara, a small locality in the triangle area, has the highest firearm related death rate per person: 55 times higher than Tel Aviv. The 13 localities that follow on the list are also Arab. The desperate residents speak about an organized crime price list, exposed for the first time by Shomrim: 5,000 ILS for vehicle arson, 50,000 ILS for leg shooting and zero expectations from the police after decades of state neglect and lawlessness in Arab cities and towns.

Riots in the Arab Community - although the outbreak of increasingly volatile protests by Israel's Arab citizens, who took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, caught almost everyone by surprise, Arab community was not shocked by the venting of anger demonstrated by young Arabs. According to social activists and political leaders interviewed by Shomrim, this rage is rooted in an explosive combination of institutional discrimination, deprivation, alienation, racism, lack of trust in the government and local disputes. Additionally, the distribution of inciteful content and disinformation via social media networks combined with a leadership vacuum also contributed to the eruption of chaos on Israel's home front. The anger has been building up years and years and cultivating a new generation born five decades after the Independence War that is fearless and fed up with oppression.

Israeli Society

Alienation and Lack of Opportunity are Pushing Arab Youths into the Arms of Criminals - crime is rampant in the Arab community, claiming the lives of dozens of young people a year. To make matters worse, criminals are becoming cultural heroes among many youths. School principals look in desperation as boys







Millions of Shekels Earmarked for the Ethiopian Community Fail to Reach their Destination and Remain in the State Pocket - the Prime Minister's

Office allocated 17 million shekels to local authorities to provide services for the Ethiopian community in the domains of housing, education, health, culture and welfare but Shomrim's investigation revealed that less than 20% of the funds were transferred and local administrations did not take up the glove.

Half a billion shekels is the budget for a 4-year plan which was launched after the demonstrations in 2015 but in contrary to catchy headlines and shiny presentations, bureaucracy is slow. Shomrim found







that a headquarter was only established in 2017 and some government ministries began implementation as late as 2019. The action plan was extended to 6 years, however with the same budget, and is still far from reaching its goals. There is also the issue of the glass ceiling in the public service sector. While the administration takes pride in the employment integration of the Ethiopian community in public service agencies and government companies, in actual most community members are employed in maintenance and cleaning positions.

Privatization of Welfare Services - this first exposé of Shomrim reveals that non-profit organizations, who struggled to survive during the COVID-19 crisis, are losing government tenders to private companies for the provision of services which they developed professional expertise in over the years. What does a hi-tech company know about social work services or what does an agency that



serves youth with developmental disabilities know about juvenile prostitution rehabilitation? Private companies have discovered the financial potential of the social services sector and the end result is minimal pay for junior professionals, reduced service capacity and an incompetent response to the most vulnerable populations. It appears as if the state is actively laboring to eliminate non-profits who are losing to private companies not only in the domains of social services but also in education, health and exhaustion of rights.



The Public Health System

An Opioid Pandemic by Doctor Prescription: 1 of 10 Israelis is at Risk of Opioid Addiction - the latest investigative report by Shomrim revealed that 3 years ago a special committee was established by the Health Ministry to regulate the excessive prescription of opioid medications, a euphemism for a deadly pandemic where the addictive potential of prescribed drugs is played down. In the US, this pandemic has crushed public health and social and economic welfare, causing normative people to become addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers and resulting in half a million deaths from opioid involved overdoses. In Israel, Shomrim discovered that 1 of 10 people consumes prescription opioids and this figure only represents drugs purchased in the White Market. Shomrim revealed the protocols of the Health Ministry Committee and data which was previously undisclosed to the public. The Committee has not reached any conclusions although this issue has become a public health crisis with devastating consequences.

The roots behind the US opioid pandemic are associated with doctors' efforts to improve pain management and aggressive marketing by pharmaceutical manufacturers. While Israel shares some of these system vulnerabilities, the Health Ministry is not in a rush to unravel the tangled financial ties between pharma companies and the medical establishment. Concerns were raised in the Committee mentioned above, including patient satisfaction questionnaires, which lead physicians to prescribe pain killers to ease patients' discomfort; the unsupervised work of pharmaceutical sales representatives in

the hospitals, who are providing interns and young unexperienced doctors with supporting articles on prescription opioids; and conferences, research scholarships and continuing medical education courses funded by pharmaceutical companies. Physicians for Human Rights representatives claim that the government is not providing sufficient funds for academic research causing physicians and researchers to become more dependent on donations from pharmaceutical companies.

Who Does Your Medical Record Belong To? - contrary to common belief, our medical chart is not fully accessible. Physicians' notes and comments, for example, which are considered separate pieces of information, are not. Whether positive or negative, they can follow a patient without his knowledge. Also, there is a fee for copies of medical records from the HMOs or hospitals, and the information provided is only what the law defines as mandatory. Changing or deleting data on the file is impossible and in some cases this information will be shared with other parties, including insurance agencies. This Shomrim investigation questions patient-doctor trust and the gains and losses of sharing personal information with healthcare professionals.

The X-Files: If You See a Private Psychiatrist, Will the Insurance Agency Know - to avoid documentation of a medical condition in the public health system, particularly a mental health condition, or to receive timely treatment, many turn to private healthcare. Yet medical information, documented by private healthcare professionals, finds its way to the IDF, hospitals or insurance companies.

Even when medication is purchased through private prescriptions, insurance companies know, Shomrim uncovers.

Scanner One for **500,000 People** - PET-CT scanning is critical to the diagnosis and treatment of oncology patients. Yet only 16 PET-CT machines serve more than 9.2 million Israelis. In the periphery, the ratio is nothing short of a scandal: in the Southern District 1:665,000 and in the Northern District 1:660,000. Patients wait weeks or months for a scan while their cancer does not, and much too often, this deprives them of timely treatment. Shomrim's investigation revealed another side effect - the proliferation of companies specializing in helping people "fix" appointments for a costly price. This troubling industry, which the state comptroller warned about several years ago, is thriving and magnifying inequalities in access to healthcare.

The Payment Arrangement for HMO Healthcare Service Providers is Impacting Clinical Decision Making, Doctor-Patient Relationship and Preventative Medicine - HMOs offer two means of payment: passive and active capitation. By way of passive capitation, a physician receives payment for each enrolled patient assigned to them, regardless of the number of patient visits. In this case, the physician will no doubt prefer patients that rarely make an appointment (e.g., young patients who see a family physician twice a year on

average). Physicians paid on an active capitation only receive basis payment according to a patient's quarterly visits and reimbursement is given only for the first visit per quarter. Undoubtedly, this physician will prefer adult patients who see doctors more frequently than the young population, and especially those with minor health problems. Payment methods influence physician practice behavior and affect proactive medical care and clinical decision making.

Environment

Israel Nature and Parks Authority has no problem receiving donations from big corporations in the heart of some of the biggest environmental battles in recent years, including ICL Group, Nobel Energy, Carmel Tunnels and Nesher - Israel Cement **Enterprises.** This Shomrim story brings attention not only to the problematic greenwashing of their environmental footprints but the dangers of conflict of interest in public decision-making. The Authority is a public corporation with enforcement power and influence on planning procedures, policy building and decision making. Its large jurisdiction and vast areas of operation can directly and indirectly impact the interests of the companies that contribute to it and when there is partial transparency of donations, concerns of neglected public interest arise.





A Spotlight on Our Journalists

At the heart of Shomrim are exceptional journalists led by **Editor, Eyal Abrahami**. Abrahami carefully selected the right mix of experienced journalists who are committed to Shomrim's mission and to investigations that produce real impact.



Chen Shalita Investigative Reporter

Began her career in journalism in 1993 as a legal correspondent for the Yedioth Yerushalayim local newspaper. She then served as a researcher for the Shetach Hefker investigative TV show. Her feature writing began in 1997 at the Jerusalembased Kol Ha'ir weekly from the Schocken Group. Thereafter, she was a staff writer for Yedioth Ahronoth's Shiva Yamim weekend supplement for 7 years, and from 2007 to 2020, served as a reporter for Globes daily G Magazine.

Chen specializes in articles in the fields of politics, law and the media that offer a behind-the-scenes look at decision-making processes, and is fascinated with sketching a sociological profile of new phenomena in Israeli society. Among her work is a series of articles characterizing the changing electorate of the political parties in Israel.

"For me, Shomrim is understanding that the How is no less important than the What. Analyzing how public systems operate on stage and behind the scenes affects our lives much more than chasing after politicians' juicy headlines. Shomrim is there to unravel these mechanisms."



Daniel Dolev Investigative Reporter

Daniel began his career in journalism as a production editor for the news pages of Yedioth Ahronoth and continued to serve as editor of the front page of Haaretz. Alongside his editorial work, he took part in the Pulitzer Prize winning Panama Papers investigation, and also published a series of articles on the eviction struggles in Tel Aviv's Givat Amal Bet and HaArgazim neighbourhoods. Thereafter, Dolev worked as a researcher for Uvda - the investigative TV show. From 2017 to 2021, he served as an investigative reporter and legal affairs correspondent for Walla news. Dolev has published investigative reports on a wide range of subjects, including the law enforcement system, the Israeli Security Agency, the Israel Police, and the State Attorney's Office.

"When repeatedly asked - Why Shomrim?, I like to say that it is the closest thing to a start-up there is today in the field of journalism in Israel. The attempt to build a new model that produces good journalism and promotes collaborations between journalists and media outlets is something that I am very proud to be a part of. Not to mention the opportunity to be involved in this initiative from its very start, to participate in its design and to hope that it will grow roots and become an inseparable part of the local media landscape."

Stoplight on our journalists



Roni Singer Investigative Reporter

Roni started her journalistic career as a broadcast journalist for Ynet and then moved on to Haaretz where she coordinated the news desk reporters, was an editor for the news desk, a consumer reporter and a crime reporter. She was also the newspaper correspondent in Kenya, Italy and France. In 2009, she was appointed reporter for Uvda, the investigative TV show, which featured her investigations on money and government, police and crime, health and welfare. After 4 seasons, she was appointed a political and investigative reporter for Calcalist. In 2018, she was a reporter and presenter for the Shetach Hefker investigative journalism documentary TV show for 3 seasons and conducted a series of investigations on cyber, kashrut, law and politics. In 2019, her documentary MeToo - Revolution was aired on Kan11. Her work on intrafamilial homicide of women in Arab society won her an international award from the EVZ Foundation - Remembrance, Responsibility and Future.

"Shomrim is an island of genuine freedom of the press.
The only agenda is facts and a good story and to achieve this,
Shomrim affords us time, space, in-depth and collaborative
investigation and all the resources that a journalist truly
needs. In an era when it is difficult to conduct in-depth
reporting, I am thankful for arriving to Shomrim's island."



Miki Levi Head of Data Analytics

Miki began his career as a columnist for Maariv, went on to the news desk and joined the editorial teams at the weekend supplement and the foreign desk. At Globes, Levi served as deputy editor of G Magazine (weekend supplement) and as editor of The Poenta, a short news section.

"I can summarize my activity within Shomrim and the overall activity of Shomrim in one simple equation: good journalism mirrors reality to the public; outstanding journalism gives the public tools to mirror reality to themselves. As a data journalist, my everyday mission is to look at widespread public opinion and to examine how much of it is true, are their angles that remain unexplored and what can be learned about Israeli democracy. The autonomy given to the Data Division to delve into any event, field, subject or attitude, no matter how small or esoteric, enables us to expose actions and mechanisms under the surface."

By the Numbers

In 2021, Vision turned into reality. Shomrim built significant and continuing partnerships, positioning itself as a reliable news source on abuses of power and betrayals of public trust, and spotlighting entrenched problems, including economic inequality, access to health care and climate change, that are unlikely to be resolved without significant changes to the system.

Journalistic Outputs

141 collaborations with media outlets up 250%

180 articles up 150%

126 data-stories up 85%

12 short videos

47 newsletters up 120%

Reader Engagement:

Newsletter subscribers	up 402%	
Twitter reach	437K monthly up 288%	
Facebook reach	728K monthly up 146%	

Most Engaging Stories*

Pandora Papers Investigation

2,042,000 views

Violence in Arab Community

_ 777,000 views

Privacy in Israel

730,000 views

KATZA - Europe Asia Pipeline Company Malfunctions

703,000 views

Operation Guardian of the Walls and the Street Riots

606,000 views

* The data was calculated by combining page views on Shomrim's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and website, and estimating reader interaction on other media platforms where Shomrim's items were republished or cited (whether a co-investigation or a follow up item).

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(in order of appearance) The Green Potrol; Ofer Vaknin; Civic Leadership; Bea Bar Kallos; Orit Siman-Tov

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Channel 12 News

(including Tochnit Hisachon - daily financial program)

Kan 11

(including Mischakei Hakis - daily financial program)

Channel 13 News

Knesset TV

Newspapers

The Marker

Calcalist

Ha'aretz (Hebrew and English)

Israel Ha'Yom

Globes

Mishpacha (Haredi Newspaper)

Online Outlets

Ynet

Mako

Walla

N12

The Times of Israel

Maariv

Bechadrei Haredim (Haredi website)

Srugim

Kikar HaShabat (Haredi website)

i24 News

Ha'Makom (The Hotest Place in Hell)

Democrat TV

Bizness (Haredi financial news website)

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Donations can be sent to:

PEF Israel Endowment Funds, Inc. 630 Third Ave, RM 1500 New York NY 10017

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The Center for Media and Democracy in Israel, Shomrim.



Budget

Total	1,335,000	Total	1,095,000
Reserves	170,000	Operating Expenses	100,000
Additional Donations	165,000	Rent & Office	75,000
Venture Philanthropy Fund	1,000,000	Salaries	300,000
Laura and Gary Lauder	1 000 000	Projects	620,000
2021 Income (USD)		2021 Expenses (USD)	

- * The figures are not final and before a financial audit
- ** For the full report submitted to the Israel Corporation Authority, please visit guidestar: (Hebrew)