

# Documents Point to Israeli Army's 1948 Biological Warfare Against Palestinians

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*The Israeli daily newspaper [Haaretz](#) has revealed the existence of documents that officially confirm that Israel poisoned Palestinian water wells in Acre and Gaza in 1948.*

The paper reported in its Friday edition the discovery of official documents proving Israel's poisoning of Palestinian water wells in 1948, in which prominent and well-known Israeli figures participated.

The disturbing story behind them was recently uncovered by historian Benny Morris and historian and Israel Prize laureate Benjamin Z. Kedar, following extensive archival research, the paper said.

This operation was partially exposed decades ago when rumors and oral testimonies were reported in newspapers and books about an attempt in 1948 by Israeli forces to poison wells in Acre and [Gaza](#), contaminating drinking water with bacteria. However, only now, in Morris and Kedar's research, has the "smoking gun" been revealed in the form of official documentation, according to Haaretz. The newly unearthed documents show that this operation was much broader in scope than earlier believed, and that other top military and political figures besides David Ben-Gurion were involved.

"We uncovered a lot of new information. We deciphered how the operation developed through its various stages; we discovered who authorized, organized, and controlled the operation; and how it was carried out in different areas," Morris says. "We have a much fuller picture now, and one that is based in part on army documentation," Kedar adds.

The pair recently published an article in the journal [Middle Eastern Studies](#) titled "'Cast Thy Bread': Israeli Biological Warfare during the 1948 War." "Cast Thy Bread" was the operation's code name. Naturally, most of the material related to the episode is censored, but when Morris searched through the Israeli army archives for any mention of the operation

by name, he was surprised to discover numerous documents. Morris writes in the article that the censor apparently was not aware of what the code name referred to.

On April 1, 1948, David Ben-Gurion wrote in his journal about “the development of science and speeding up its application in warfare”. A month and a half later, he wrote about “biological materials” that were purchased for \$2,000, the paper said.

It pointed out that now it became clear the extent of the link between what Ben-Gurion wrote and Israel’s purchase of biological materials, which appear to be a specific powder or liquid used to poison Palestinian well water.

The new documents revealed that these operations were supervised by well-known Israeli figures, led by: David Ben-Gurion, former defense minister Moshe Dayan, and former Israeli president Ephraim Katzir, among others.

The operation began in April 1948, when fears of an invasion by Arab armies were mounting. The plan was to poison wells in abandoned Arab villages as well as in Jewish locales that were due to be evacuated by new Israeli state. The idea was to prevent Arabs from returning to their villages and from settling in Jewish locales that would fall into their hands.

The documents show that Ben-Gurion was at the top of the pyramid. Below him was Yigal Yadin, who oversaw the military side of the operation. The operation was commanded by Yohanan Ratner. Initially, the top man in the field for the group was Dayan, who went on to become the Israeli army chief of staff and defense minister. The documents indicate that Dayan served as the smuggler who conveyed the bacteria from the science corps to different points throughout the country.

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