

Israel's Bloodcurdling 'Poison Policy' to Replace Palestinians with Jewish Settlers

To vacate Palestinian lands for incoming Jewish settlements, Israel greenlit covert crop-dusting operations to spray toxic chemicals that would drive out the local population.

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A [shocking document](#) last September revealed that, during the 1948 Nakba, Zionist militias engaged in a wide-ranging chemical and biological warfare campaign to expel indigenous Palestinian communities from their lands, slow the advance of intervening Arab armies, and poison citizens of neighboring states.

This unconscionable use of biological weapons on civilian targets, which sought to infect the local Palestinian population with typhoid, dysentery, malaria, and other diseases by contaminating local water supplies, was subject to a concerted coverup at the time – one that was maintained by the Zionist state for decades thereafter.

Even after its exposure, the Israeli academics who helped break the story were at pains to diminish its significance, unconvincingly arguing it was a failed strategy promptly jettisoned and forgotten about as a result.

But newly declassified Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) files starkly underline this narrative to be an abject lie. Released by the [Jewish Settlements Archival Project](#), an initiative of New York University's [Taub Center for Israel Studies](#), they amply show that the Israeli occupiers employed much the same tactics in order to purge Palestinian areas to make way for illegal settlements in the West Bank, and elsewhere.

Facts on the ground

In 1967, Tel Aviv emerged victorious in the Six Day War and [effectively annexed](#) significant swaths of surrounding territory from neighboring Arab states.

Israel's occupation of these areas, and indeed the construction of settlements for Jewish colonists, was and remains [absolutely illegal](#) under international law and has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations. Initially, successive Israeli governments claimed the settlements were the work of individual settlers and non-governmental entities such as the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization, and insisted that the state neither approved of nor could prevent their expansion.

Again, the newly-released papers starkly demonstrate this to be a deliberate deception. The trail begins in January 1971, when the cabinet of then-Israeli prime minister Golda Meir met to discuss the forthcoming construction of settlements. The need for unfailing public secrecy about what was about to happen was considered paramount. At the start of the summit, the premier requested:

“Before we move forward with our discussion, there’s something I’d like to ask. It was our habit that for anything that has to do with settlements, outposts, land expropriations, and so on, we simply do and do not talk [about it]...Lately, this ... has broken down, and I’m asking ministers for the sake of our homeland to hold back, talk less, and do as much as possible. But the main thing, as much as possible, is to talk less.”

This extended to Meir demanding ministers not attend settlement opening ceremonies, and avoid being seen by the media anywhere near the sites. In April 1972, this oath of silence remained very much in force, with minister without portfolio Yisrael Galili reminding his cabinet confederates at a meeting to “refrain from dealing with the matter in the press, as it could cause damage.”

Around this time, the Israelis began constructing the first illegal Jewish settlement, Gitit, in the West Bank. Kickstarting the criminal enterprise required displacing Palestinians from the nearby village of Aqraba. This was first attempted by brute force, with IDF soldiers demanding they vacate the area to make way for a new military training zone.

The Palestinians ignored them, and continued cultivating the land, prompting Israeli forces to damage their tools. When they still refused to budge, the IDF was ordered to use vehicles to destroy crops, and dispossess the indigenous population. Soldiers struck upon a radical, bloodcurdling solution: *a crop duster would rain down toxic chemicals, lethal to animals and dangerous for humans, to precipitate their departure.*

Still, Aqraba's population refused to budge, prompting the IDF to up its devilish campaign's ante quite considerably. In April 1972, the military's Central Command met with representatives of the Jewish Agency's settlements department. They established “responsibility and schedule for the spraying,” at such a density that it would preclude humans from inhabiting the area for several days “for fear of stomach poisoning” and animals for a full week.

The Jewish Agency was given the job of obtaining the plane, which it did from Chemair, a local crop-dusting company. The explicit aim was to “destroy the harvest” of the Palestinians, and forcibly expel them from the area in perpetuity.

The next month, the destruction was so severe that Aqraba's mayor wrote to Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. They stated the village had 4,000 residents, who until recently had cultivated “145,000 dunams of agricultural land.” Now, after “the authorities” had burned

wheat and confiscated land, the Palestinians were left with just 25,000 dunams.

“The damage is unbearable ... how will we be able to provide for ourselves?” the mayor despaired.

Israeli occupation forces finally took over the land in May 1973. Tel Aviv was asked for permission to “seize the land for the purpose of establishing a settlement,” which was granted. Three months later, construction commenced.

‘Get cover for it’

While Israeli governments covertly encouraged and facilitated the creation of illegal settlements, it is clear there was some internal dissent on the issue at various times.

In 1974, the head of the Israel Lands Administration began steps to establish another Jewish settlement in the West Bank, Ma’aleh Adumim, before the government had made a formal decision on the matter. Former IDF general turned Knesset representative Meir “Zarro” Zorea actively lobbied the Jewish Agency to allocate an appropriate budget for the effort, suggesting the organization “funnel money to settlement activity and get cover for it after a while, when I request budget approval.”

At a subsequent cabinet meeting however, then-Housing Minister Yehoshua Rabinovitz was dismayed, declaring, “this has no budget, and I don’t know how work is being started without sitting down with us.” Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin attempted to calm him, stating, “that’s what we’re meeting about right now.”

“There might be room for clarifying this issue, but I wouldn’t suggest going into it today. I know it may not be following the neatest definitions, but I’m in favor of them starting to carry out this infrastructure work,” he added.

Later on, the aforementioned Yisrael Galili pressed ministers to define Ma’aleh Adumim as “an A-class area,” thereby granting it and its Jewish settler population greater benefits from the government, despite the fact it would lie in illegally occupied territory. The Israeli government officially granting the settlement this classification would, by definition, amount to a de facto endorsement, in contradiction to its official public stance.

“I’m surprised that you don’t understand that this whole subject is one of the ingenious methods to alleviate a process that could be very dangerous internally in Israel,” Galili explained.

These shocking communications remained concealed for half a century before the Jewish Settlements Archival Project released them to the world. It is almost inevitable that a great many more incriminating documents remain sealed in the IDF’s vaults. The project’s archives end in summer of 1977, and as of [January 2023](#), there are 144 illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, including 12 in East Jerusalem, housing 450,000 colonizers.

Stealing that much land, and displacing so many people in the process, was a vast undertaking that frequently met bitter local resistance, which continues today. Given the efficacy of chemical and biological warfare in stealing Palestinian land over so many years, there is no reason to think this heinous approach wasn’t employed again and again over the years.

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