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PA paid legal defense fees of 1948 Tantura affair historian

By [David Ratner](#)

Former Palestinian Authority minister Feisal Hussein paid \$8,000 for the legal defense of historian Teddy Katz, the kibbutz member whose master's thesis, "The Departure of Arabs from Villages on the Southern Slopes of Mount Carmel," claimed that Arabs in the village of Tantura were massacred in 1948, sparking a bitter legal fight with veterans of the 33rd battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade. The PA's funding for Katz was reported yesterday by Yedioth Ahronoth.

Responding yesterday, Katz said he will not comment until he submits a revised version of his work to Haifa University. He indicated, however, that he does not believe there have to be anything wrong with taking money from Hussein.

The money, Katz said, did "not come from the Palestinian Authority, but rather from the research institute that Hussein headed." A friend of Katz's yesterday said the historian had no choice but to take the money. "Katz, a kibbutz member, lacked means for a defense against the NIS 17,000 suit against him by veterans of the Alexandroni Brigade ... not to mention the legal fees he incurred in his defense."

The Katz affair began in 1998, when the historian submitted his MA thesis at Haifa University on the departure of Arabs from Tantura. Relying on oral testimony culled from Arab and Jewish sources, he claimed several dozen villagers at Tantura were massacred by the Alexandroni soldiers. His thesis received a top mark of 97.

After a report on his research was published in Ma'ariv, members of the battalion sued Katz for libel.

During the trial Alexandroni veterans' lawyers pointed to discrepancies between the taped interviews Katz conducted and descriptions in his thesis. By June 2000, Katz knew he faced a protracted legal battle and so approached Feisal Hussein for help.

In December 2000, Katz published an apology and retracted allegations about the massacre. He has tried subsequently to revoke the deal with the Alexandroni veterans.

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