

comment added by dan censor;

Subject: Teddy Katz

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Dear Prof. Censor

Will you please post the attached English version of the Rector's letter in response to the findings of the Council of Graduate Studies, regarding Teddy Katz's thesis.

Thank You

Prof. Ada Spitzer

Assistant to the Rector

<<Katz.doc>>

**The Rector's Response to the academic process concerning
Mr. Katz's Thesis**

In March 1998 Mr. Teddy Katz submitted an M.A. thesis to the department of History of the Middle East at the University of Haifa. The subject of the thesis was: "The exodus of Arabs from villages at the foot of the southern Carmel in 1948".

Upon the receipt of the thesis at the library, some of its findings – specifically, that members of the Alexandroni brigade allegedly committed a massacre of Arabs in the village of Tantura -- caused considerable controversy in the media. Representatives of the Alexandroni brigade filed a libel suit against Mr. Teddy Katz, charging systematic and tendentious distortion of facts in his transcripts concerning the occupation of Tantura by the brigade's soldiers. These accusations were based on a study of

transcripts of the recordings made by Katz during the course of interviews he held with eye-witnesses, and following the comparison of the transcripts with the actual citations in his thesis.

A compromise was reached in court, according to which Teddy Katz retracted his accusations and rendered an apology. After the agreement was reached, Teddy Katz changed his mind and asked that the agreement be revoked. The court, however, refused and declared the agreement legally binding.

At the conclusion of the legal procedure the university decided upon the following steps:

1. Establishing a committee to examine whether the contents of the recordings and the transcripts were faithfully rendered in the text of Mr. Teddy Katz's thesis paper.
2. Establishing a committee to examine the university procedures for supervising theses and Ph.D. dissertations.
3. Conducting academic discussions within the School of History on the issue of the methodology of oral history.

In conducting these three measures, the university signaled its determination to investigate this case comprehensively.

The committee that examined the reliability of the contents of testimonies as presented in the thesis submitted a report to the Rector. On the whole, the committee pointed out that the thesis "failed at the stage of presenting the raw material for the reader's judgement, both in terms of its organization according to strict criteria of classification and criticism, and in terms of the apparent instances of disregard for the interviewees' testimony." The committee also harshly criticized the scientific merit of the thesis.

The committee's report was conveyed to Mr. Teddy Katz, the thesis supervisor, and several of the office holders in the Department of the History of the Middle East. Each recipient of the report was given the chance to respond. In addition, the entire report was brought to the attention of the University faculty as well as the public at large.

The Rector instructed the Council for Advanced Studies at the University of Haifa to discuss the committee's report, including the various responses, as well as to formulate appropriate conclusions. After an exhaustive discussion, the council determined that, due to the fundamental faults permeating the thesis, the council could not accept it in its current version. Therefore, the council suspended approval of the thesis and the grade awarded it. The council further decided that the student could submit a revised version, taking into account the material submitted to the council and any other pertinent material.

Mr. Teddy Katz revised his thesis, which was duly sent to five senior academic referees. The summary of the referees' comments revealed the following:

Two referees rejected the amended thesis out of hand, and three referees accepted the paper with highly critical and harsh reservations. Some of the referees commended the information-gathering process invested in the paper and its extent, but all five referees noted essential failures in the research process, its methodology and the standard of data analysis. Specifically, the referees indicated major research failures, such as: the very serious failure in verifying the reliability of the testimonies; lack of distinction between different types of testimony, such as visual and oral testimonies; the lack of any criteria for assessment of the testimonies' validity, reliability and importance; the lack of criteria for accepting some of the testimonies while rejecting others, and furthermore for choosing certain versions over contradictory ones; the lack of a systematic method for analyzing the testimonies and the absence of in-depth analysis – methods that are a *sine qua non* for qualitative research.

There is no doubt that the problems in the research identified by the referees cast grave doubts concerning the validity of the conclusions in the amended thesis. These fundamental problems were at the basis of the committee's criticism of the thesis's original version and led to the council's original decision to suspend the thesis and require its revision. Moreover, some of the referees cite the writer's obvious lack of the most basic

methodology tools used in historical research. This lacuna may reflect a failure in the process of supervision and approval of the thesis.

The harsh criticism evident in all the referees' reactions precluded the approval of Mr. Katz's amended thesis and the award of a research-track Master's degree by the council. In accordance with another council decision, Mr. Teddy Katz will receive a non-research track M.A. degree, based on his scholastic achievements during the course of his graduate studies.

Despite immense pressures from various sources, the University of Haifa took the utmost care to conduct the process in accordance with strict academic criteria.

Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev
Rector