



Today, for the region's yearly commemoration, el Dia de les Balearics, or simply “la Diada”, officials took the first step in an on going initiative by the Govern to honour collective memory. The steps followed a proposal from a special panel on the disappeared and unmarked graves that was commissioned by the Balearic ministry of culture, participation and sport.

Held this Thursday afternoon in the Sant Ferran cemetery, the gathering consisted consisted in the erection of a statue engraved with an etching by Sebastiano Rossi. The general design will be replicated across similar commemorative sites. A plaque with the names of five islanders —Jaume Ferrer Ferrer, Josep Ribas Marí, Joan Tur Mayans, Jaume Serra Juan and Vicent Cardona Colomar— who perished at the hands of pro-Franco forces, shot down behind the cemetery wall 81 years ago to, March 1, 1937.

Fanny Tur, the minister of culture in the Balearics; Susana Labrador, Tur's opposite number on the island; Artur Parrón of Fòrum per la Memòria Històrica d'Eivissa i Formentera; and numerous family members of the five victims congregated at an inaugurational ceremony. Councillor Labrador described it as “another step towards healing”, calling the monument “a place families can come to remember their loved ones and articulate suffering they should never have had to endure”.

According to Tur, “no community or people can celebrate their heritage as is due when many of their dead lie in unmarked graves”. She highlighted the symbolism inherent in unveiling the monolith —“the first of its kind”, she intimated— on a day that is at once the a commemorative holiday for the region and the 81st anniversary of the five islanders' murder.

Mr Parrón underscored the role of families in keeping the victims' memories alive. “The victims are the true protagonists. They are the symbols of this incomplete and imperfect democracy of ours. Forty years on, we have yet to find the remains of those that died setting this democracy —that of the second republic— in motion”.

A piece of legislation known as “Law 10/2016”, of June 13, concerning victims of the Spanish

Civil War and pro-Franco violence (published in the Balearic Islands' official gazette on June 16) sets out protocol for protecting and honouring the sites of killings.

Historical background

In November 2017, an archaeological dig took place at the Sant Ferran cemetery in a bid to locate the remains of five islanders murdered during the course of Spain's civil war. The action was approved on April 26, 2017 by a special commission on war victims and mass graves and was carried out by the Fòrum per la Memòria Històrica d'Eivissa I Formentera, an offshoot of the commission which received funding for the initiative.

The work of the archaeological team, and specifically, their location of projectiles and shrapnel in the outer wall of the cemetery where the shooting occurred, made it possible for the team to establish exactly where the murder of the five Formentera natives took place. Fragments of a human skull perforated by shrapnel led the archaeologists to the conclusion that the individual they belonged to had met a violent end. The bone fragments are currently in a laboratory undergoing tests to determine the identity of the victim.