



CiF chairman Jaume Ferrer plus Susana Labrador, who is both deputy chair and councillor of culture and patrimony, were joined by regional minister of culture, participation and sport Fanny Tur and Luis Ruiz, the chair of Eivissa and Formentera's Fòrum per a la Memòria Històrica, in attending a symbolism-charged ceremony involving the remains of five islanders killed by Franco supporters on March 1, 1937 along the back wall of the cemetery in Sant Ferran.

On Saturday March 9 at the very same cemetery, the officials handed over the remains of Jame Ferrer Ferrer, Josep Ribas Marí, Joan Tur Mayans, Jaume Serra Juan and Vicent Cardona Colomar to surviving members of the victims' families. The remains were found as part of an effort to locate, excavate and subsequently exhume a mass grave at the inside of the Sant Ferran cemetery, which is property of the Eivissa-Formentera bishopric.

Exhumation effort

Crews performed various targeted digs on and adjacent to the 125-square-metre lot (six and five, respectively) which has been used as a burial ground since 1903. Inspections inside the cemetery followed conventional wisdom about where the interred remains might lie: beside the cemetery entrance, underneath headstones built in 1956 and 1984, below another gravesite and in a portion of the cemetery without grave markers.

Popular memory again directed the probes outside the cemetery walls, conducted with the help of excavating machinery. Patches of cement found on the southeast wall served to confirm the hypothesis that holes were poked into the walls by executioners' bullets. Four bullets were detected as well; one wedged into the wall was uncovered with the help of a metal detector.

The major discoveries emerged thanks to investigation of skeletal remains, which suggested the bodies of the five executed were at some point transported to the ossuary to make room in the cemetery for new burials, then a common practice with ageing remains.

Crews unearthed a piece of a humerus bone and two fragmented skulls bearing firearm damage not unlike others found in Civil War burial sites. The crew of specialists carried out two

checks to confirm the skeletons belonged to the individuals in question. The first involved reviewing entries in the civil registry from 1991 to 1994 and confirmed the absence among the 156 deaths catalogued of any caused by impact of a projectile, which would indicate that the three bone fragments might indeed correspond to one of the five victims.

The second test involved DNA cross-checking of the remains and living relatives of the victims. Due to imperfectly preserved DNA samples, however, it was impossible to establish consanguinity. Saturday's gathering included a symbolic ceremony during which the remains of three individuals who had been shot were deposited into a niche that will be accessible to the victims' families.

Other actions

Last year on March 1, eighty-one years after the islanders were killed, a monolith with the engraved names of the five victims was unveiled in the cemetery as a symbol of the effort to reclaim this portion of local historic memory.

The regional ministry of culture, participation and sport's efforts to locate and then exhume the mass grave were conducted thanks to a grant received by the Fòrum and additional support from the Formentera Council.

Published on June 16 in issue 76/2016 of the BOIB, a piece of legislation known as "Law 10/2016 (June 13)" to recover the bodies of people who disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship sets out measures to ensure the protection and dignity of resting grounds of Spanish Civil War victims.

Formentera Council
Àrea de Comunicació
March 11, 2019