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GRAVE OF GARCIA LORCA

Spain prepares to exhume grave of Garcia Lorca

They will focus primarily on four small parcels that are likely to contain the remains of Garcia Lorca and the other men.



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Crews made final preparations Wednesday to exhume a mass grave in southern Spain thought to contain the remains of poet Federico Garcia Lorca, the most famous victim of Franco's repression.

Garcia Lorca, Spain's most widely acclaimed 20th century poet, was shot by supporters of right-wing General Francisco Franco at the start of Spain's 1936-39 civil war who denounced him as a republican, a Communist and a homosexual.

His body, along with three other men who faced the firing squad, is believed to have been dumped into a mass grave in Alfaca, one of six thought to be located near the town near Granada. Two other bodies may also have been buried there.

- The three archaeologists responsible for the opening of the mass grave at Alfacar will begin their work on Thursday morning - said the spokesman for the regional ministry of justice, Javier Giraldez.

Workers set up a large white canvas tent at the site where Garcia Lorca is thought to be buried -- usually marked by flowers left by visitors as a tribute to the poet -- to protect the privacy of family members of the deceased.

They will focus primarily on four small parcels that are likely to contain the remains of Garcia Lorca and the other men.

Any bones which are found will be sent for analysis to the University of Granada to enable families who wish to do so to identify their ancestors.

The excavation could take at least two months, according to the Granada branch a group called the Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory, a group that has been working since the late 1990s to help people locate the graves of loved ones who went missing during the war.

- People want to know where their relatives lay to heal their wounds. Lorca is just another body - said the president of the branch, Maribel Brenes.

The mass grave is being opened at the request of family members of other victims who are though to be buried with Garcia Lorca.

The poet's relatives have opposed the exhumation of his remains and have not provided samples of their DNA to make identification of his bones possible, leading some historians to speculate that Garcia Lorca's father may have secretly transported his bones to the family's summer home near Granada.

A tour guide at the home, the Huerta de San Vicente, expressed frustration Wednesday that the "body of the poet is of greater interest than his works" after a British visitor asked her where Garcia Lorca is buried.

- The dead buried at the grave at Lanjaron also near Granada where there are 4,500 bodies don't interest anyone. No dead person is more important than another - added the guide who spoke on condition that her name not be published because the subject was "difficult".

Garcia Lorca was just 38 when he was killed. His poems and plays, which deal with universal themes such as love, death, passion, cruelty and injustice, are widely studied at universities.

He is one of the roughly 130,000 civilians killed by Franco's forces who were never accounted for, according to an estimate by the Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory.

While the regime honoured its own dead, it left its opponents buried in hundreds of unmarked graves across the country which are only now being unearthed with the encouragement of Spain's Socialist government.

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