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## Spain begins opening poet Lorca's suspected mass grave - Summary

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findings public.

The author of Gypsy Ballads and Poet in New York was arrested in the house of a poet friend shortly after right-wing General Francisco Franco had staged an uprising against the leftist republican government.

Lorca is believed to have been shot dead with teacher Dioscoro Galindo and bullfighting assistants Francisco Galadi and Joaquin Arcollas.

Two other people, tax inspector Fermin Roldan and restaurant owner Miguel Cobo, may lie in the same grave.

The executioners loyal to Franco saw the 38-year-old poet as a leftist, because his work was sympathetic to the downtrodden, and also targeted him as a homosexual.

The Spanish civil war killed some half a million people and ended with the victory of Franco whose dictatorship lasted until his death in 1975.

The Franco regime paid tribute to its own dead, but an estimated 120,000 alleged leftists killed during and after the war still lie in mass graves around Spain.

The opening of the Alfacar graves was expected to give a new push to exhumations which have already dug up the remains of some 4,000 people.

They have been carried out mainly by private associations, which have been receiving official assistance especially after Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's Socialist government passed a 2007 law seeking to restore the honour of Franco's victims.

The law was opposed by the opposition conservative People's Party (PP), which still has a former Francoist minister in its ranks, and which argues that discussing the Franco era divides Spanish society.

The opening of the Alfacar graves follows a six-year judicial and administrative battle, with courts disagreeing over which one of them was responsible for the Lorca case.

The Andalusian regional government finally authorized the opening of the graves at the request of the Galadi, Roldan and Cobo families.

The Lorcas oppose the operation, arguing that giving the poet a new burial would single him out from among anonymous war victims.

Lorca experts such as historian Ian Gibson, however, say the exhumation is necessary in order to establish the definitive truth about the poet's fate.

Many people also find it shocking that Spain's most beloved modern poet, whose verses are read around the world, and the main symbol of Franco's repression should have been left in an unmarked mass grave.

The Lorca family has tentatively agreed to provide DNA samples for identifying his bones, but may not allow the findings to be made public, though many observers believe it will be difficult to keep them secret.

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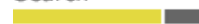
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The exhumation has already aroused widespread media attention, prompting the regional authorities to cover the site of 200 square metres with a tent-like structure and to put it under guard around the clock.

The experts working at the site are not even allowed to use mobile phones while digging at the soil with picks and spades.

The bones will be sent for identification to a laboratory at the University of Granada.

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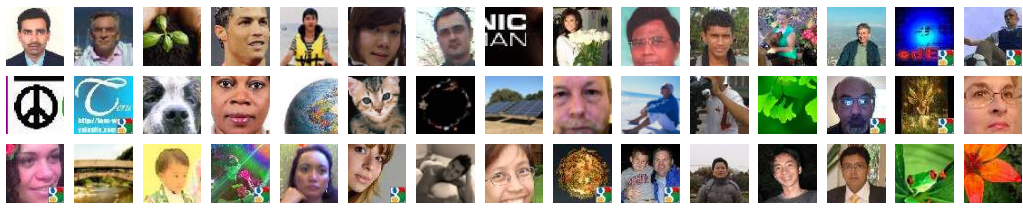
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