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Home Page

[Travel in Andalucia](#)
[Supplements](#)
[Please help us](#)
[General Information](#)
[SUR in English in PDF](#)
[Readers' Photos](#)

## [SECTIONS]

[Special Features](#)
[General News](#)
[Update](#)
[Andalucia](#)
[Costa del Sol News](#)
[Ask the experts](#)
[Regular columns](#)
[Interviews](#)
[Facts and Faces](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Letters to the Editor](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Health And Beauty](#)
[Food and Beverage](#)
[Sport](#)
[Gibraltar Special](#)
[Here and there](#)

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for sale

for sale  
 for rent

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## [SERVICES]

[SUR in English 20th anniversary](#)
[Where to find SUR in English](#)
[Useful phone numbers](#)
[Church services](#)
[Weather](#)
[Consulates](#)
[Clubs](#)
[Street markets](#)
[Classified ads](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Where to go on Internet](#)
[Subscriptions](#)

## General News

**Unearthing memories**

Ignacio Lillo

*After a wait of almost 70 years relatives of Malagueños shot during the Civil War have witnessed the start of work to recover their remains*

"I'm mourning my father. He never had a proper wake". Sitting on a chair with a blanket wrapped round her shoulders, 74 year old Francisca Córdoba keeps an eye on the progress of the labourers. She was five years old when it happened, but claims she remembers it all. "I know where he is, the grave digger was a friend of his and put him in last", she explains. Vicente Córdoba, her father, had been charged with just one offence. "The Guardia Civil took him away for making a remark to a woman". That was the start of a story of survival in which the father figure was never far away. "We brought flowers every year, often in secret". Daughters and granddaughters left their bridal bouquets in a spot few wanted to talk about. "I know he didn't do anything. That's why I'm here. It's hard, very hard."

On Monday the long awaited day came. After four years of red tape, digging began in the area of the mass graves that contain the remains of at least 3,648 local Malaga men who were shot during the Civil War in the old San Rafael cemetery. Furthermore this is the first grave of these dimensions to be opened in Spain. This was confirmed by Francisco Espinosa, the president of the Association Against Silence and Oblivion and for the Recuperation of Historical Memory. The idea came up when the local authority announced its decision to turn the old cemetery into a park, as they did in the case of San Miguel, and the families refused to have their memories sealed under cement.

## Monument

With the help of the University of Malaga, the Junta de Andalucía and the City Hall, the association hopes to recover the human remains which will then be kept in numbered boxes in a tomb beneath a monument to be erected in their memory in the future park. This will be located on the site of some of the mass graves and will be inscribed with the names of all the deceased on the register. This will also leave the possibility open for relatives to identify their loved ones through DNA testing at a future date.

Sebastián Fernández, archaeologist and lecturer at Malaga University, is coordinating the work. "Today (Monday) we are preparing the ground so that if it rains it can be drained". The digging will be carried out using a geophysical study carried out by the University of Granada, which has marked the location of five mass graves - popular tradition only spoke of two - with depths ranging between 50 centimetres and three metres. The work will be manual and is expected to take some six months, with the participation of two archaeologists, a topographer and several labourers, the majority students in the fifth year of their History degree with experience in this type of project and volunteers from the Andalusian Youth Institute.

A number of relatives went to the former cemetery on Monday morning to witness the start of the work. José Dorado, Juan Chún and Francisco Espinosa were among them. All three lost their fathers and share a common need to prevent those events of the past from being forgotten.

May they rest in peace, albeit 70 years too late.

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