INTRODUCTION TO FORENSIC ARCHAEOLOGY

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Humanitarian need

- Best practices
- Good recovery
- Identification process
  - Good documentation
  - Good interpretation
  - Good collection
- Dignity of the dead
- Finding missing persons
- Right to know
The right and need to know

• To know the fate
  • Where?
  • What and how?
Families as protagonists

- Not “data givers” and “bone receivers”.
- Part of the processes.

05.10.2013, Lamjung district, Fedikuna. With the support of the ICRC Hateymalo psychosocial support program, a prayer ceremony is organized for the persons who went missing during the conflict. Photographer: s.n. Copyright: ICRC.
Dignity and care

• To treat the dead with dignity

05.06.2016. On the outskirts of Maiduguri, Muna informal camp for internally displaced persons. Men bury body of a young boy named Abba who died earlier that day. Photographer: Knowles-Coursin, Mackenzie. Copyright. ICRC.

10/2014. Huancasancos. One of the twins blows smoke into his father’s cranium as a sign of respect for a last smoke during a family vigil in the house in which his father was murdered. Photographer: Cohen, Nadia Shira. Copyright. ICRC.
Dignity and care

• Impact of forensic work on the dead


Baghdad, morgue of the Medico Legal Institute. Forensic anthropologists walk past body bags containing mortal remains. Photographer: Ov, Ed. Copyright: Getty Images/ICRC.
Mourning and repatriation

08.05.2013. Guatemala. Yalambojoch, near the Guatemala-Mexico border. The community is burying the remains of persons who went missing – or were “disappeared” – during the conflict in the 1980s. Photographer: Hernandez-Salazar, Daniel. Copyright. ICRC.

Mourning and repatriation

01.2009. Ayacucho region, Huamanga province, Huamanga city. Families in the office of the Prosecutor of Huamanga, during the returning of the bodies of identified missing persons. Photographer: Atauje, José. Copyright. ICRC.

08.2009. Peru. Ayacucho region, Huamanga province, Huamanga city. Families in the office of the Prosecutor of Huamanga, during the returning of the bodies of identified missing persons. Photographer: Atauje, José. Copyright. ICRC.

08.2010. Peru. Ayacucho. The bodies of missing persons are restituted to their families by the Institute of forensic medicine. Copyright. ICRC.
Places of death

Best practices

- Knowledge
- Equipment
- Planning

Contextualized

Best possible practices
What is Forensic Archaeology?

Contribution from the Social Sciences to forensic contexts

Forensic archaeology – theories, methods, perspectives, techniques, paradigms from archaeology to a legal/humanitarian context

Multidisciplinary approach


20.06.2017. Falkland/Malvinas Island. Near Darwin, Argentine military cemetery. The Forensic work continues on the autopsy table where the mortal remains are analysed in-depth. Photographer: Revol, Didier. Copyright ICRC.


02/2008. Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tuzla. The personal belongings that have been retrieved from persons who have been executed in the hope that family members might through these items be able to identify a missing relative. Photographer: Danziger, Nick. Copyright. NB picture for ICRC.


29.08.2008. Putis. Exhibition of clothes of missing persons found in a mass grave close to the village. Photographer: Martos, Dafné. Copyright. ICRC.
Field work

1. Underestimated:
   - Heavy
   - Demanding
   - Stressful
   - Monotonous
   - Long
   - Dangerous

2. Huge importance
   - Starting point
   - Face of project
   - Build/ruin the relation with community and families
   - Preserve/destroy evidences
   - Allow/compromise whole conclusion and interpretation
   - Straight relation with planning and costs

Non specialists, people want to leave, but they can't
Basic concepts for proper recovery
Context

• Place where and how things were found, in relation to soil, layer, features.


Surface

Body A

Body B

Body C

Body D
No context = less information = less chances to find someone
Surrounding context

• Respecting the place
  • E.g.: cemeteries

Destruction

• Excavation is a destructive process

Documentation and interpretation

Motel dos Misterios, 1970,

The Sacred Urn
Identification

• Giving identity back
  • What happened during one's life?

• Proper recovery and management of remains:
  • Maximize chances of identification through:
    • collection of information.
    • preservation of remains and data.

08.05.2013. Guatemala. Yalambojoch, near Guatemala-Mexico border. The community is burying the remains of persons who went missing during the conflict. Photographer: Hernandez-Salazar, Daniel. Copyright ICRC.