



### **D71 Is it Possible to Identify 15 Victims in a Mass Grave With More Than 5,000 Human Skeletal Remains? Lonquén Case, Chile**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of a comprehensive approach in human rights violation cases. The analyses carried out by the various disciplines as well as continuous work with the families of the victims is highlighted, as a part of contributing in a better way to the judicial objectives, it provides emotional reparation to persons affected by political violence.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community showing how interdisciplinary work could help to resolve complex forensic cases associated with grave human right violations.

In the role of the expert in relation to the elucidation of the truth in cases of human rights violations, lies the need of an entire community to build trust and social ties.

This work presents the methodology used to identify 15 victims of the military dictatorship (1973-1990) illegally buried in a mass grave containing more than 5,000 commingled skeletal remains.

In 1978, as a consequence of an anonymous report to the Archbishopric of Santiago, semi-skeletonized human remains of 15 individuals were found in an old lime kiln in the area of Lonquén. This was the first finding of bodies reported through the mass media, as an explicit evidence of something that was already known in the depths of the society but which had steadily been denied by the authorities of the time.

At that time, the court ordered the recovery of remains and their transfer to the Instituto Medico Legal of Santiago, work that was carried out by unskilled staff. This situation resulted in the dismemberment of the bodies and the subsequent loss of individualization of the same.

The technical and political conditions neither allowed the victims to be identified (only one of them was identified) nor elucidating the cause of death; however, the investigation determined that the bodies belonged to 15 individuals arrested in the town of Isla de Maipo, near Santiago, in October 1973, who were mostly farmers that had participated in the Agrarian Reform process promoted by the two previous governments. Finally, following the public uproar, the Military Justice acknowledged the illegal inhumation of the remains in a mass grave of the cemetery of Isla de Maipo.

In March 2006, thanks to the perseverance of the families and according to the request of the Court, all of the content of the mass grave was exhumed, exceeding 5,000 elements corresponding to at least 30 adult individuals. Documentary, anthropological, dental, clothing, and genetic analyses were performed for almost four years, establishing the effective presence of the 15 individuals recovered in 1978 from the Lonquén kilns. Also established was their cause of death as well as the identification of 13 of the victims. On March 28, 2010, a funeral was celebrated for the victims with a massive and emotive act in the cemetery of Isla de Maipo.

At present, genetic analysis that would determine the identification of the two victims who are still missing is still pending.

**Commingled Human Remains, Human Right Violations, Multidisciplinary Forensic Analysis**