GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE POLÍTICA TERRITORIAL Y MEMORIA DEMOCRÁTICA

The Valley of Cuelgamuros

Jaime del Rey

State Secretariat for Democratic Memory
Ministry of Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory



Valley of Cuelgamuros · aerial view

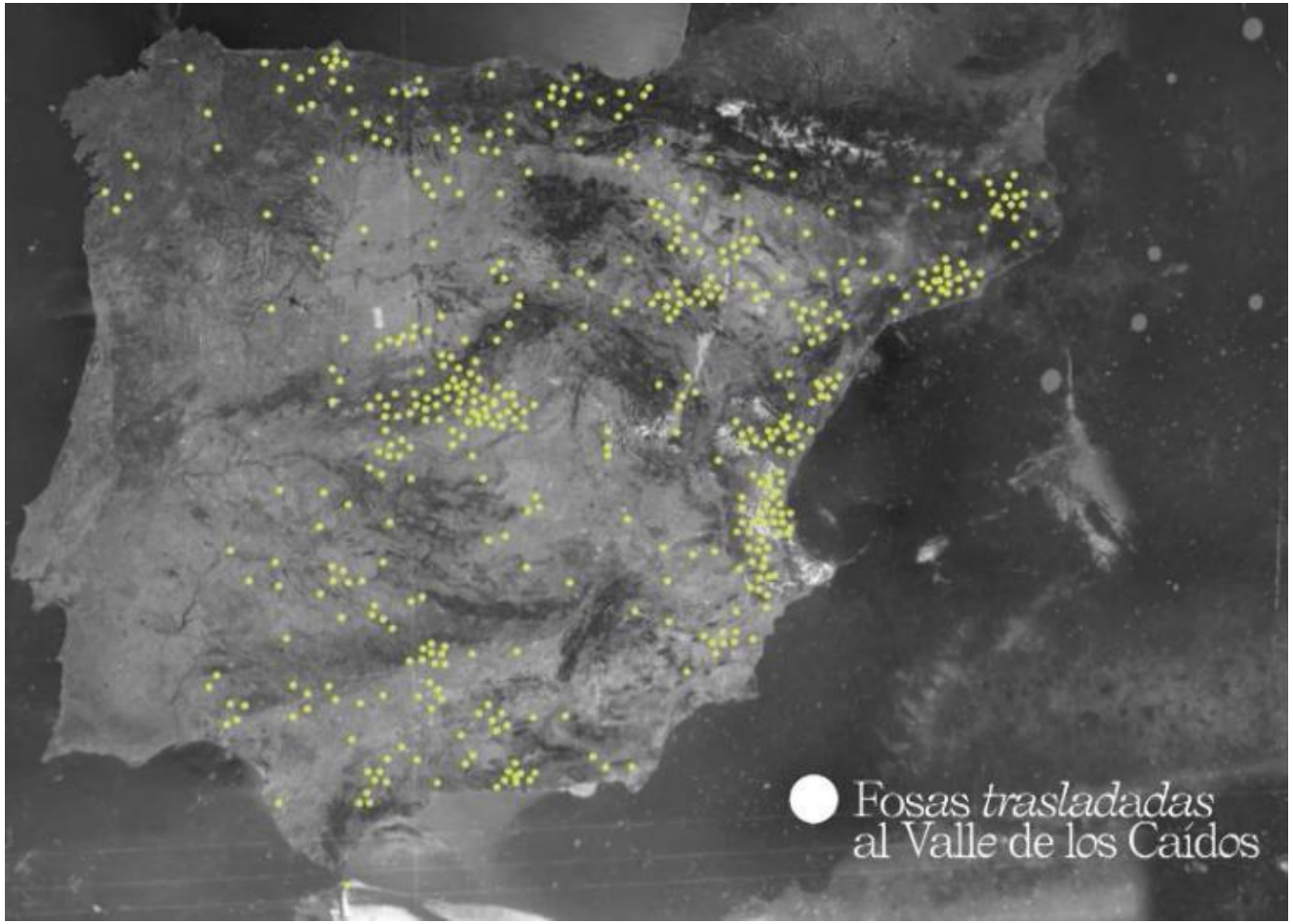
Image: RTVE

Why is the Valley so important?

- **An emblematic monument:** Probably the most iconic construction project of Franco's dictatorship.
- **Monumental scale:** Its colossal dimensions make it visible from much of the Sierra de Guadarrama.
- **Spain's largest Civil War burial site**.
- **A largely unknown and unexplained monument:** Even many Spaniards know little about its history.
- **A controversial legacy:** It has never been widely accepted as a genuine symbol of national reconciliation.

A MASS GRAVE OF WAR VICTIMS

Camilo Alonso Vega (Spain`s Minister of Interior) may 1958, orders civil governors, and through them town councils, to transfer remains to the Valley, "regardless of the side on which they fought".



33,833

people interred in the Valley, two thirds with full names.

500 original burial sites

Data: bodies interred in the Valley by year (1959–1983). Graphic: RTVE, "Fosas trasladadas al Valle de los Caídos".

Legal change and historic milestones

2007 — **Historical Memory Law (Ley 52/2007)**

Only those who died in the Civil War may be buried in the Valley.

2019 — **Franco exhumed**

24 October: remains moved to Mingorrubio. CSIC studies the crypts the same year.

2022 — **Democratic Memory Law (Ley 20/2022)**

Art. 54: any remains in a preeminent place are to be relocated.

2023 — **Primo de Rivera moved**

24 April: exhumed and transferred to San Isidro.

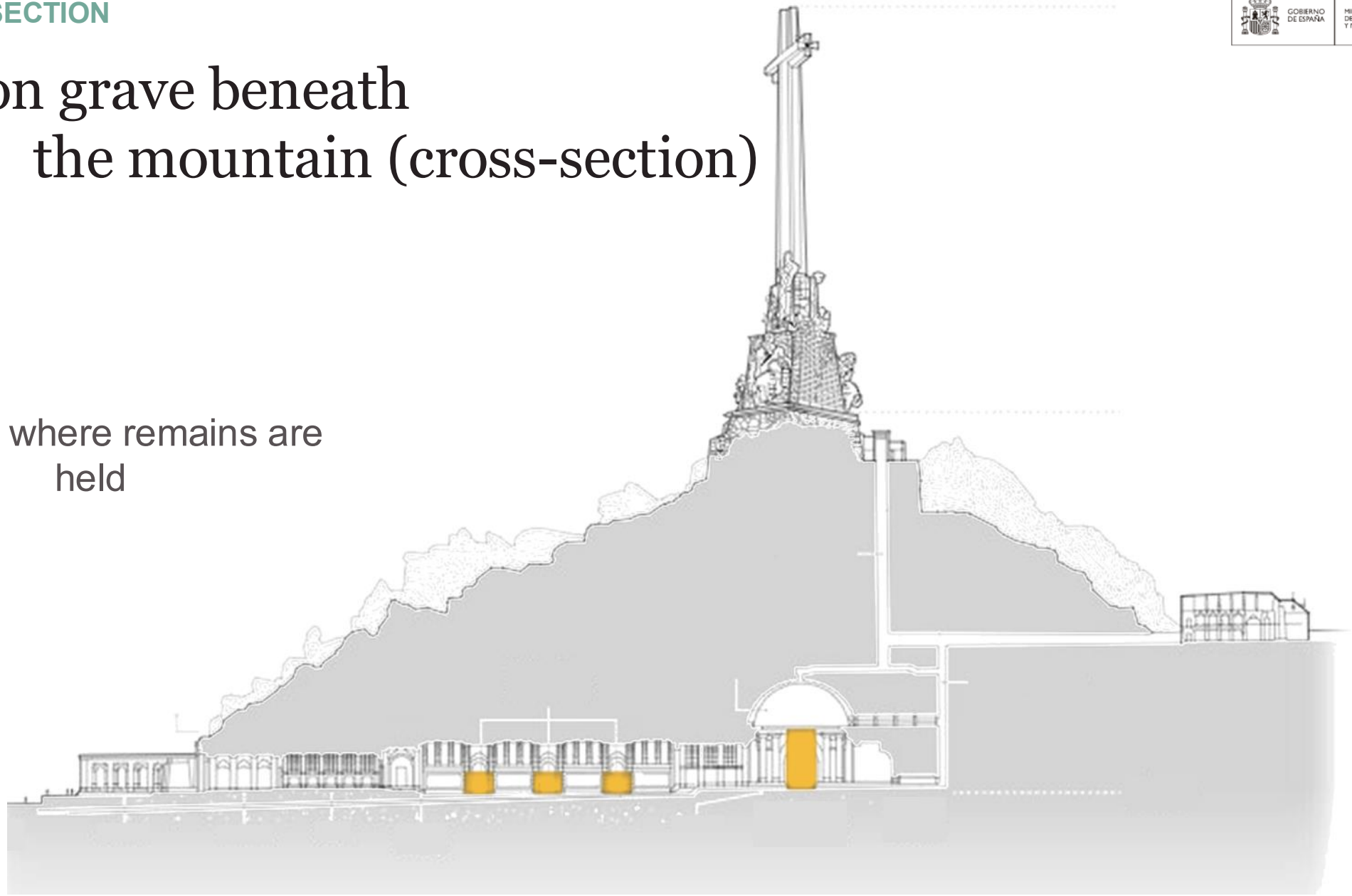
2023 — **First crypt opened**

12 June: opening of the first crypt, Santo Sepulcro chapel.

Sources: Ley 52/2007; Experts Commission report, 29 Nov 2011; Ley 20/2022, art. 54.

A common grave beneath the mountain (cross-section)

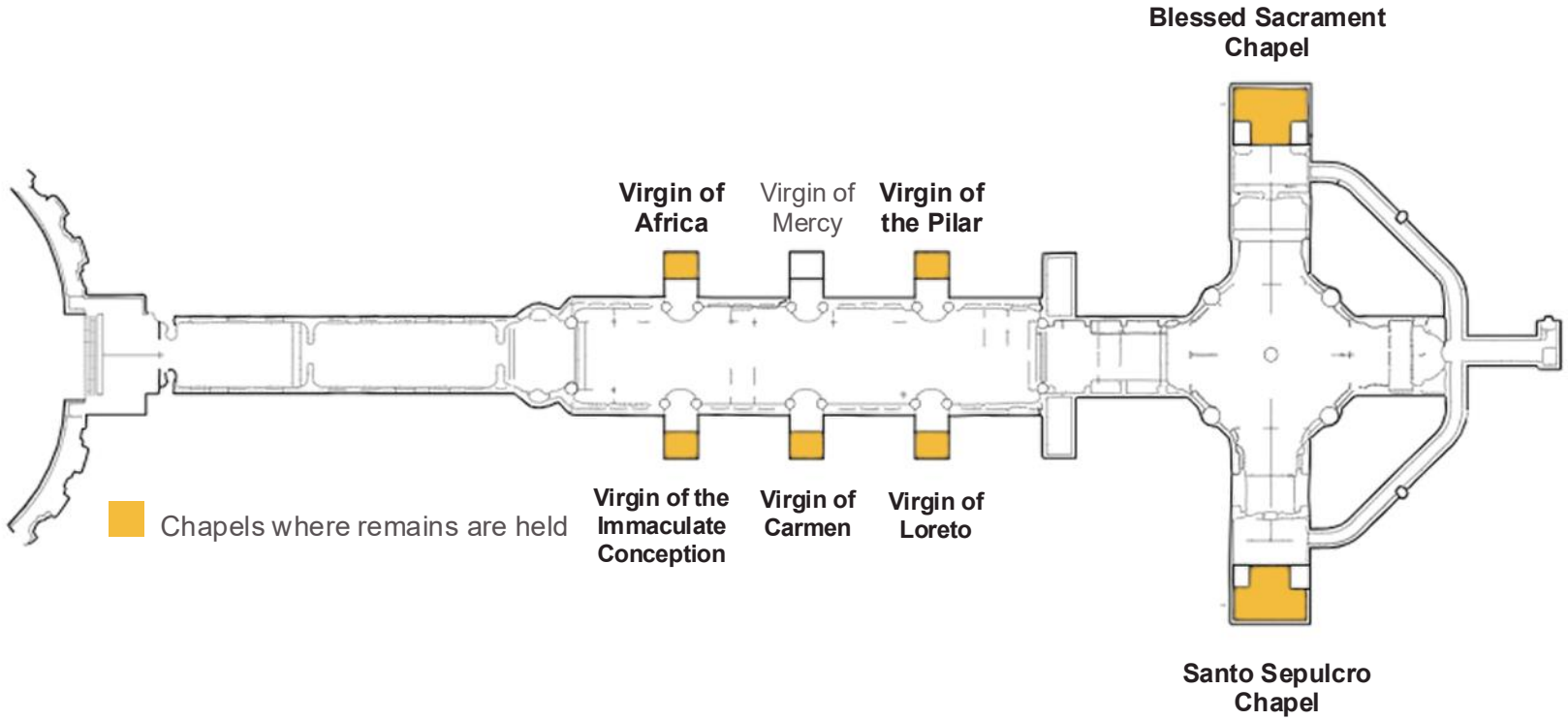
Chapels where remains are held



Infographic: RTVE / DatosRTVE (design: Hiberus), "Dónde están los 33.800: lo que ocultan las paredes de Cuelgamuros", 25 Sep 2026. Recoloured on white; labels translated into English.

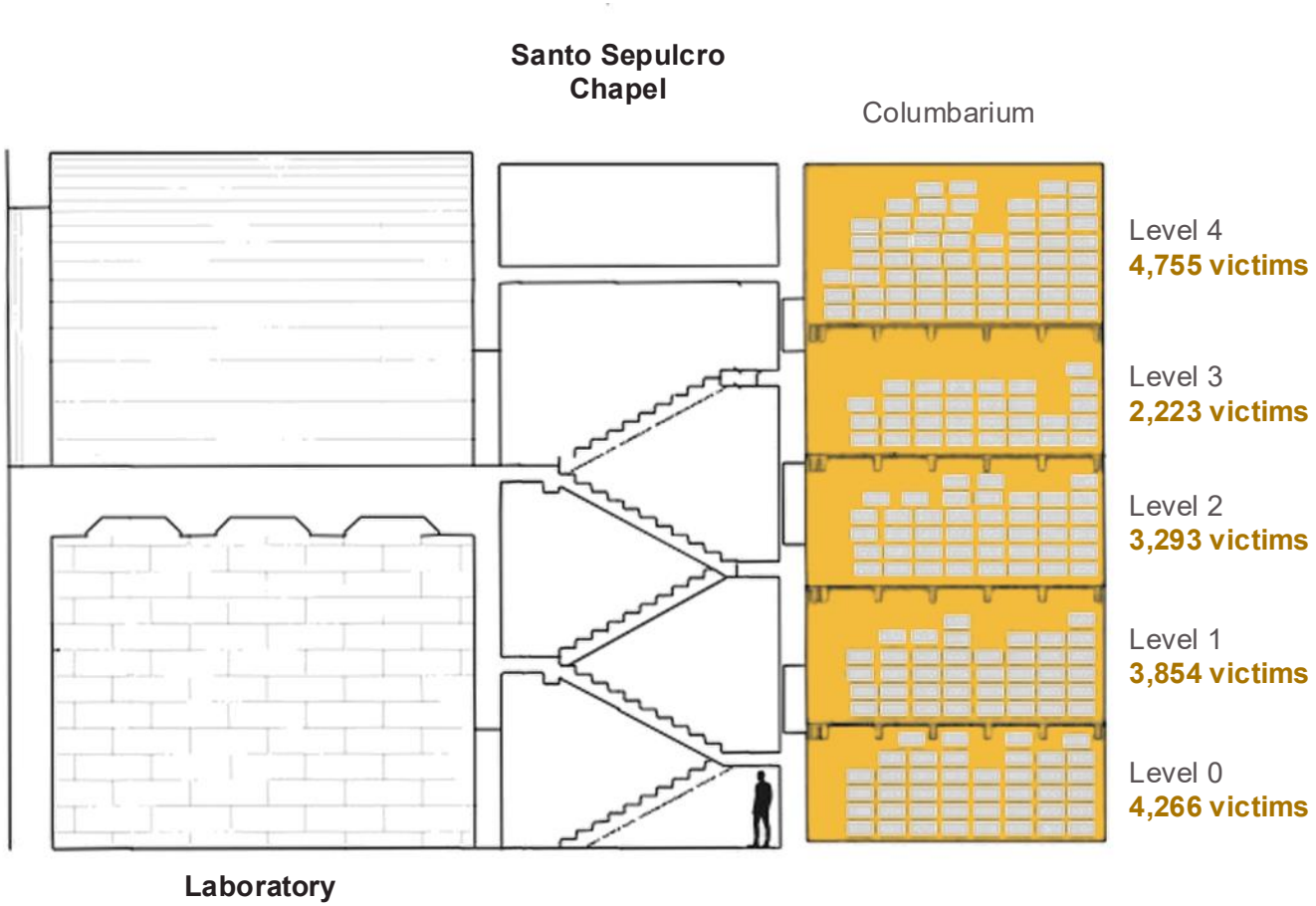
Chapels where remains are held (floor plan)

Yellow: five side chapels of the nave, plus the Blessed Sacrament and Santo Sepulcro chapels.



Infographic: RTVE / DatosRTVE (design: Hiberus), "Dónde están los 33.800: lo que ocultan las paredes de Cuelgamuros", 25 Sep 2026. Recoloured on white; labels translated into English.

Five levels of niches, more than 18,000 victims



18,391

victims in the five levels (sum of the figures shown in the RTVE graphic).

54%

of the 33,800+ victims moved to the basilica are in the Santo Sepulcro columbarium (RTVE).

Infographic: RTVE / DatosRTVE (design: Hiberus), "Dónde están los 33.800: lo que ocultan las paredes de Cuelgamuros", 25 Sep 2026. Recoloured on white; labels translated into English.

From opening the Sto. Sepulcro crypt to forensic analysis








Top row: Santo Sepulcro chapel, 12 June 2023. Original photo credits to be confirmed.
Bottom row: Documenta RTVE / RTVE. Source: RTVE, 25 Sep 2026 (laboratory infographic).

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Where the process stands

222
Families have been granted permission

411
bodies exhumed (Santo Sepulcro)

304
bodies genetically analysed

25
bodies identified and returned to families

Next challenges

- Launch of the State DNA Bank.
- Mass upload of thousands of DNA profiles from 11 accredited labs.
- Finding more matches.

Thanks: Francisco Ferrándiz (CSIC), Francisco Etxeberría (SEMD). Graphic resources: RTVE. elvalledecuelgamuros.gob.es

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Thank you !

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