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Forensic Anthropology in Contexts of Human Rights Violations and Mass Violence:
An examination of the ethical, political, and methodological considerations

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ABSTRACT

Forensic anthropology is most employed in localized criminal cases or investigations; however, it is also involved in the investigation of human rights violations and mass violence. The involvement of forensic anthropologists in international cases of human rights violations and mass violence has increased significantly in recent years; yet, there is no generalized guideline as to how these investigations differ from regular casework. Forensic anthropologists typically enter these contexts without any previous experience or notion of what specifically to be prepared for. Through a critical literature review, this study aims to establish what ethical, political, and methodological considerations forensic anthropologists must make and/or be aware of when working in these contexts. While no two investigations are ever going to be the same, the literature, case studies and review articles alike, established that there are some general consensuses and points that are reiterated repeatedly. How forensic anthropologists conduct work in contexts of human rights violations and mass violence is undeniably different from how work is conducted in regular casework.