

# *Colombian Government Begins Work to Exhume Hundreds of Bodies*

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Medellin, Colombia, July 28 (RHC) — Colombian authorities on Monday began the country's largest forensic excavation to search for hundreds of victims of both organized crime and armed groups buried under huge piles of trash.

The excavation is taking place at a site known as La Escombrera (The Dump) in Comuna 13, a complex of slums perched on the mountains surrounding the northwestern city of Medellin.

Comuna 13 has suffered from Colombia's more than five decades of conflict among various guerrilla groups, the security forces and right-wing militias, as well as from the activities of criminal gangs.

Based on accounts from families of Comuna 13 residents who have been "disappeared," authorities suspect that several hundred bodies are buried underneath the mountain of trash at La Escombrera.

The first phase of the exhumation project, in which forensic anthropologists and other experts are taking part, will require an investment of about 1 billion pesos (\$350,000) and includes the construction of a mausoleum for recovered bodies that are unidentified or unclaimed.

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