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Recovery and identification of human remains in post-conflict environments: a comparative study of the humanitarian forensic programs in Cyprus and Kosovo

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Highlights

- Humanitarian Forensic Programs in Cyprus and Kosovo reveal disparate trajectories.
- Forensic programs face growing difficulties in locating graves with the accrual of time.
- Building local forensic capacity contributes towards greater sustainability.
- Building local forensic capacity strengthens the response to challenges.
- Reflecting on lessons-learned helps inform strategies for future forensic programs.

ABSTRACT

This study follows the humanitarian forensic programs in Cyprus and Kosovo over a ten-year period with an emphasis on the role of local capacity building. It begins by providing an in-depth historical account of forensic activities, followed by a comparison of the rate of excavations, exhumations and identifications. Through this analysis, a repeated pattern emerges whereby forensic activities in Kosovo start with a surge in values, which drop drastically in the first few years of operations, followed by a steadily declining productivity curve. By contrast, in Cyprus, activities begin modestly, with lower values allowing for some

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