

Chile's National Search Plan: Visiting Judge Álvaro Mesa Leads Searches in Five Human Rights Cases Across Temuco, Valdivia and Puerto Montt

El Ciudadano · 11 de octubre de 2025

Using advanced lidar and ground-penetrating radar drones, Visiting Judge Álvaro Mesa led searches across southern Chile to locate sites tied to five crimes against humanity cases, groundwork that will guide forthcoming exhumations by the Forensic Medical Service.



Álvaro Mesa, the visiting judge for human rights violation cases in the jurisdictions of Temuco, Valdivia, Puerto Montt and Coyhaique, traveled to the communes of Padre Las Casas, Pucón and Purránque, along the Ensenada–Las Cascadas route, and to Puerto Montt to carry out proceedings under Chile’s National Search Plan.

According to officials, Judge Mesa led searches connected to five crimes against humanity cases across the southern macrozone, supported by a team of court clerks; officers from the PDI’s Human Rights Crimes Investigation Brigade; investigators from the Human Rights Program of the Justice Ministry’s Undersecretariat; representatives of the Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared; and collaborating experts from the National Geology and Mining Service.

High-tech tools were deployed, including a drone equipped with lidar and ground-penetrating radar to pinpoint sites of interest identified in the case files.

‘We have been working from Temuco to Puerto Montt on a series of proceedings that feed into the National Search Plan,’ Judge Mesa said. ‘We had previously surveyed sites of interest, but now we are using improved drone technology to identify locations with greater precision so that, once reports are completed, the analysis will yield stronger inputs and we can return with Forensic Medical Service specialists to conduct the corresponding exhumations.’

In this phase, other steps included summoning individuals, notifying property owners to authorize entry, and geolocating multiple sites and points of interest. Listen to the full report below:



«Science with Justice»

In September, a [call for applications](#) opened to take part in «Science with Justice», an initiative to build a network of scientists, researchers and academics who can contribute their expertise to the most complex cases within the National Plan for Search, Truth and Justice.

The call is jointly coordinated by the Undersecretariat for Human Rights and the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation, and will culminate in an open meeting on October 27, 2025, where the network's guidelines will be presented and the different modes of collaboration explained. Read more below:

Science and Justice ministries invite specialists to strengthen the National Search Plan

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Fuente: El Ciudadano