



For Immediate Release

Contact: Daniel McLaughlin
dmclaughlin@cja.org

DAUGHTERS OF MAGISTRATE KILLED IN COLOMBIA VOW TO CONTINUE THEIR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

A ten-person jury in Miami finds Defendant Plazas Vega not civilly liable for the 1985 torture and extrajudicial killing of Magistrate Carlos Horacio Urán Rojas.

Miami, Florida, September 17, 2026—Today, a Miami jury determined it could not find Plazas Vega, a former Colombia military colonel, civilly liable for torture and extrajudicial killing in a case brought by Plaintiffs Helena Urán Bidegain, Mairée Urán Bidegain, and Xiomara Urán. The Defendant, Plazas Vega, is retired from his position in the Colombian military and currently resides in Florida.

“Four decades ago, rather than bringing my father home to his family, the Colombian military tortured and killed him while operating an unlawful program of detention, torture, extrajudicial killing, and enforced disappearance” said Helena Urán Bidegain, plaintiff and daughter of Magistrate Urán. “To this day, no one has been held accountable for his death. We will continue to fight for accountability for our father’s death.”

The jury’s inquiry centered around two days of fighting in 1985 between a non-state armed group and Colombian security forces at the Palace of Justice, which housed Colombia’s Supreme Court, and the military’s conduct in the immediate aftermath. The jury examined the *especiales* system, in which civilians were detained, tortured, and extrajudicially killed by Colombian forces, if and how Magistrate Urán was classified as *especiales* and subsequently tortured and killed by the Colombian military, and the role that Plazas Vega played in his death.

During the 8-day trial, which began on September 8, 2026, the jury heard from Plaintiffs, eyewitnesses, experts, and Plazas Vega himself as parties presented evidence related to the Colombian militaries targeting of civilians in the aftermath of the Palace of Justice siege.

One expert witness detailed Colombian security forces’ longstanding policy of detention, torture, extrajudicial killing, and enforced disappearance known as the *especiales* system. Other witnesses testified to their experience during the Palace of Justice siege in which, rather than be rescued safely as they expected, the military diverted them into detention facilities where they were tortured. Several witnesses, video evidence, and documentary material suggested that Plazas Vega took a leadership role during the Palace of Justice operations.



“We are of course disappointed by the verdict, but believe we established a strong record of Colombian security forces’ unlawful actions at the Palace of Justice,” said Claret Vargas, Senior Staff Attorney of the Center for Justice and Accountability. “This case built on decades of work by Colombian advocates and victims’ families to hold Colombian security forces’ accountable for their abuses of power. Our clients, along with many Colombian survivors of state violence, will continue to seek accountability for these violations to ensure non-recurrence in the future.”

About the Center for Justice and Accountability

The [Center for Justice and Accountability](#) (CJA) is a San Francisco-based international human rights organization dedicated to working with communities impacted by torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious human rights abuses to seek truth, justice, and redress using innovative litigation and transitional justice strategies. CJA has successfully brought cases against defendants such as the commander in charge of the Lutheran Church Massacre in Liberia, the military officer responsible for the assassination of Chilean activist and singer Víctor Jara, and Syria's Assad regime for its targeted killing of war correspondent Marie Colvin.