

EL PAÍS

Justice in sight for family of Chilean folksinger slain in 1973

[Silvia Ayuso](#). Washington. April 17th 2015



Chilean folksinger Víctor Jara, in an undated photograph provided by the foundation that bears his name.

Those who were with leftist folk singer Víctor Jara the day he died inside Chile's national stadium – one of the most sinister symbols of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship – say he never stopped smiling.

After the man who sang the praises of Salvador Allende's Marxist government was rounded up with hundreds of other university students, he was tortured by Pinochet's men and forced to play Russian roulette with them on September 16, 1973 – five days after Allende's bloody overthrow.

Jara was shot more than 40 times, a 2009 autopsy would show. No one has ever had to answer for his murder.

Barrientos, now a US citizen, had been living quietly in Florida, working as a car salesman

Meanwhile, Santiago's Víctor Jara stadium, as it has been known since 2004, would be a silent witness to many more brutal crimes committed during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990).

Now, four decades later, Víctor Jara's family may finally obtain the justice they have been seeking for so long. On Tuesday, a federal judge in Florida ordered a former Chilean army lieutenant to answer torture and extrajudicial charges in connection with the folksinger's death.

Pedro Pablo Barrientos, 66, who is now a US citizen, had been living quietly in Deltona, Florida, outside Orlando, where he worked as a car salesman.

But he had been fighting extradition charges since one of his officers, José Alfredo Paredes, identified him before a Chilean court in 2009 as Jara's murderer. Judge Miguel Vázquez, who is investigating the Jara case, charged him with homicide in 2012 and asked the United States to extradite him after a Chilean television station ran a report about his new life in Florida.

Then in September 2013, the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA), an international organization that seeks to bring human rights violators to court, took up the Jara case.

Along with the Chadbourne & Parke law firm, it filed a civil suit in a US District Court in Orlando on behalf of Jara's widow, Joan, and their daughter Amanda, accusing Barrientos of torture, extrajudicial killing and crimes against humanity.

CJA lawyer Almudena Bernabéu said she was happy that Barrientos would face a courtroom to answer to Jara's murder even though she was "disappointed" that the judge dropped the crimes against humanity allegation.

"Víctor Jara's murderer and the thousands of crimes committed during Pinochet's regime ought to be named as what they are: crimes against humanity," she said.

Nevertheless, the ones who are smiling again are his widow and daughter who for the first time will see someone brought to answer to Jara's murder in a courtroom – something they have been awaiting for 42 years.

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