

Trial Begins for Pinochet Killer of Chilean Singer Victor Jara



Orlando, June 15 (RHC)-- The former Chilean military officer accused of murdering folk singer and political activist Victor Jara in 1973, immediately following the U.S.-supported military coup that installed the brutal regime of former dictator Augusto Pinochet, is on trial in an historic move toward justice after more than 40 years of impunity.

Former Lieutenant Pedro Pablo Barrientos Nuñez faces charges for arbitrary detention linked to carrying out Victor Jara's torture and murder for his support of socialist President Salvador Allende, ousted from power in the U.S.-backed coup.

Victor Jara and thousands of other political prisoners were rounded up and tortured in the sports stadium in Santiago, now named in honor of the murdered folk singer, just days after the coup. His tortured body was found with 44 bullet holes outside the sports complex, which served as a concentration camp.

The first hearing heard in a court in Orlando, Florida, where Barrientos has lived for over 20 years after fleeing Chile when the Pinochet dictatorship fell at the end of the 1980's. Jara's widow Joan gave testimony in court during the session, the first of about 20 witnesses in the case.

The California-based Center for Justice and Accountability, which brought the civil suit against Barrientos in 2013, has called the action historic in the attempt to seek truth and justice for heinous crimes committed during the Pinochet regime.

The trial marks the first time that Barrientos, a dual U.S. and Chilean citizen, has appeared in court for his role in Jara's death. A 2012 indictment against Barrientos and seven others by a Chilean judge has moved slowly, while the U.S. has not formally responded to an extradition request from the Chilean government.

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