

Former Pinochet Lieutenant Living in Florida Liable for Murder and Torture

Forty three long and painful years have passed since Víctor Jara, the famous Chilean folk singer whom Rolling Stone Magazine called one of the top 15 protest artists of all time, was found dead covered with dozens of bullet wounds in the brutal Pinochet military coup that upended his country.

A Florida jury found Florida resident Pedro Pablo Barrientos Nunez liable for the torture and murder of Jara, and the court ordered Barrientos to pay \$28 million in damages – \$8 million in compensatory damages and \$20 million in punitive damages.

Richard S. Dellinger with **Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster, Kantor & Reed, P.A.** in Orlando served as the local counsel and worked closely with The Center for Justice and Accountability, a San Francisco-based legal advocacy group, and the New York law firm Chadbourne & Parke, LLP to represent the Jara family.

“This is justice at its best,” said Dellinger who worked tirelessly with the legal team in the eight-day trial. “Mr. Barrientos received a fair trial process that Mr. Jara never received. I am proud of what we were able to give the Jara family, who never lost sight of what happened 43 years ago and fought hard to hold Jara’s killer to account. I hope that this week’s verdict provides some measure of justice and renewal for the Jara family,” added Dellinger.

In a release, the firm said:

Joan Jara, Victor Jara’s 88-year old widow, attended the trial and said, “It has been a long journey seeking justice for Victor’s death. His songs continue to be sung today, and inspire both artists and those who seek social justice. For

Victor, art and social justice were one and the same. Today, there is some justice for Victor's death, and for the thousands of families in Chile who have sought truth."

The legal team filed a civil suit on September 4, 2013 before the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida against Barrientos on behalf of Jara's widow, Joan Jara, and children, Amanda Jara Turner and Manuela Bunster. The complaint alleged that Barrientos was responsible for the torture and execution of Jara, who was also a theater director and activist inspired by artists such as Bruce Springsteen, Bono, Joan Baez, Holly Near, Arlo Guthrie, Peter, Paul & Mary, and The Clash. A professor of theater in Santiago in 1973, Jara was one of thousands of intellectuals, political leaders and perceived political supporters of the Allende government detained en masse at Chile Stadium during the early days of the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet.

The former officer, Barrientos, who is now 65 years old, moved to Central Florida at the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990. His whereabouts were unknown until mid-2012, when a Chilean television crew located him in Florida. He worked as a landscaper and then a cook. Over the past several years, Barrientos worked at Perkins Restaurant in Deltona. Barrientos told the court that he came to the United States to earn money for his family. He did not report his military past when he applied for citizenship in 2010.

"I find it unnerving that the former Pinochet Lieutenant who is responsible for the torture and murder of Victor Jara and others at the Chile Stadium was living right here in Deltona," said Dellinger. "This is a person who could have been one of our neighbors."

Throughout the trial, the plaintiffs called many eyewitnesses to the stand, including ex-military conscripts

assigned to the Chile Stadium detention center who placed Barrientos at the scene of Victor's death. One conscript testified that Barrientos repeatedly boasted that he killed Jara. Additional testimonies came from others who were incarcerated in Chile Stadium with Jara, who witnessed the brutality levied against him by the Pinochet regime.

Jara's torture and death has become a world-wide symbol for the suffering of all the innocent people who were detained, tortured, and killed at Chile Stadium, many of whom have yet to be identified.