
Three Chilean Officers Charged with Murder of Victor Jara

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Three more officers have been charged with the murder of folk singer Victor Jara, killed five days after the military coup that initiated the Pinochet dictatorship.

Army officers Hernan Chancon Soto and Patricio Vasquez Donoso were charged Wednesday by Chilean Judge Miguel Vázquez with kidnapping and aggravated homicide. Ex-army prosecutor Ramon Melo Silva was also charged as an accomplice.

"This decision has to be celebrated and we hope this investigation can continue," Jara's widow, Joan Jara, said at a press conference. "We know this marks a milestone."

Victor Jara, whose songs dealt with social and political issues, was arrested with thousands of other supporters of socialist President Salvador Allende during the coup in September 1973. At least 5,000 were held in a Santiago stadium where Jara was tortured and killed —a stadium that now bears his name. An investigation has shown that he was shot in the head and his body was riddled with 45 bullets.

The three ex-army officials now being tried are in addition to eight former officers charged in late 2012 and early 2013 with the killing of the popular singer and songwriter.

Jara's family filed a civil lawsuit last year in the United States accusing former Chilean army Lt. Pedro Barrientos Nunez of ordering soldiers to torture the singer, according to agencies. Barrientos, who left Chile in 1989 and is living in the U.S., is part of the group of officers who

also face criminal charges in Chile related to the singer's killing.

The Chilean government estimates 3,095 people were killed during Pinochet's rule, including about 1,200 who were forcibly disappeared.

Approximately 700 military officials still await trial in Chile and around 70 have been jailed for crimes against humanity.
