

By Pascale Bonnefoy

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SANTIAGO, Chile — Eight retired army officers were charged on Friday with the murder of a popular songwriter and theater director, Víctor Jara, who was tortured and killed days after the 1973 military coup in a stadium that had been turned into a detention center.



*Victor Jara Foundation, via Reuters*

Víctor Jara, a folk singer, songwriter and theater director, was 40 when he died.

Judge Miguel Vásquez charged two of the former officers, Pedro Barrientos and Hugo Sánchez, with committing the murder and six others as accomplices. Mr. Sánchez, a lieutenant colonel, was second in command at the stadium. Mr. Barrientos, a lieutenant from a Tejas Verdes army unit, currently lives in Deltona, a city southwest of Daytona Beach, Fla., and was interrogated by the F.B.I. earlier this year at the request of a Chilean court. Attempts to reach Mr. Barrientos for comment were unsuccessful; his two listed telephone numbers had been disconnected.

Judge Vásquez issued an international arrest warrant against Mr. Barrientos through Interpol Santiago and ordered the arrest of the other seven, who were in Chile. Those charged as accomplices are Roberto Souper, Raúl Jofré, Edwin Dimter, Nelson Hasse, Luis Bethke and Jorge Smith.

Víctor Jara, then 40, was a member of the Communist Party and a leading folk singer in the late 1960s and early '70s. A day after the American-supported Sept. 11 coup that ousted the socialist president, [Salvador Allende](#), Mr. Jara was arrested by the military at the Santiago Technical University, where he was a professor and researcher, along with hundreds of students, teachers and staff members.

The detainees were bused to Chile Stadium, since then renamed Víctor Jara Stadium, and held in the bleachers for days with thousands of other prisoners, in the custody of army units brought in from various parts of the country.

Judge Vásquez established that Mr. Jara was recognized by military officers, separated from the rest of the detainees and taken to the basement dressing rooms, which were being used to question prisoners. There, he was interrogated, beaten and tortured by several officers, according to the court.

On Sept. 16, 1973, when the stadium was evacuated and the prisoners transferred to the larger, open-air National Stadium in the capital, Víctor Jara and a former prison service director, Littré Quiroga, who was also detained there, were taken to the basement and killed. The bodies of both men and three other victims were later found dumped near a railroad track outside a cemetery; one of the victims remains unidentified. According to the autopsy report, Mr. Jara was badly beaten and was shot 44 times.

Mr. Jara's widow, Joan Turner, a British dancer and a resident of Santiago, was unavailable for comment.