



## The Martín-Baró Initiative: Justice for Ignacio Martín-Baró

### History about the Lawsuit and Recent Updates

Ignacio Martín-Baró was one of six Jesuit priests, who along with their housekeeper and her daughter, were assassinated on November 16, 1989 in the José Simeon Cañas Jesuit University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador, El Salvador.<sup>1</sup> The perpetrators were part of an elite military unit, the Atlacatl Battalion, of the Salvadoran army, which was ordered to kill Father Ignacio Ellacuría, rector of the UCA, and to leave no living witnesses behind.<sup>2</sup> The Report of the UN Truth Commission on El Salvador later stated that the priests were targeted for their “special concern for those sectors of Salvadorian society who were poorest and most affected by the war,”<sup>3</sup> which some sectors of the military interpreted as being involved with the armed rebel guerrilla movement, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). This criminal event was part of El Salvador’s 12-year civil war that cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

The prosecution of some involved in the massacre began on November 13, 2008 when the Spanish Association for Human Rights and The Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA) filed criminal charges in Spain against 19 former military personnel and the former President of El Salvador, Alfredo Cristiani. Indictments were issued by the Spanish court against all of these individuals. Colonel Inocente Montano, the only defendant who did not live in El Salvador, had immigration fraud charges filed against him by the Department of Homeland Security in the U.S., where he was living. After being tried for immigration fraud, Montano was sentenced to 21 months in

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<sup>1</sup> This event has sometimes been referred to as the Jesuit Massacre, however since this term tends to obscure the killings of their housekeeper and her teenage daughter who were murdered alongside them, we will refer to it as the UCA murders here.

<sup>2</sup> Bernabeu, A. (2020). Fall 2020 Bay Area Latin America Forum. In *Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies*. UC Regents. Retrieved from <https://clas.berkeley.edu/jesuits-massacre-trial-return-accountability-human-rights-violations>.

<sup>3</sup> “From Madness to Hope: the 12-year war in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador.” Retrieved from: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf>.





prison in the U.S. Responding to the Spanish National Court's extradition request, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a complaint for Montano's extradition to Spain when his release date was approaching in April 2015. After he unsuccessfully challenged his detention with a *habeas corpus* petition, Montano was extradited to Spain on November 29, 2017. The Spanish court had originally ruled that Montano was eligible for extradition on February 5, 2016, and on that very day, the Salvadoran national police arrested four defendants in the Spanish criminal trial. Since they had been tried prior for the UCA murders in El Salvador, the court decided against extraditing these four defendants to Spain. The court restored the *status quo* before the amnesty law, leading to Colonel Guillermo Benavides being left in a Salvadoran prison and to three previously-acquitted soldiers being freed. The General Amnesty Law for Consolidation of Peace of 1993 was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Chambers of the Supreme Court of El Salvador on July 13, 2016; the law in question had protected other people associated with the massacre from criminal charges. As of early 2017, Almudena Bernabeu—a former Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) Transitional Justice Director—retained the clients from the prosecution through her new firm Guernica 37.

Following 30 years of impunity, the trial for the UCA murders finally commenced in June 2020 in a Spanish courtroom. Spanish co-counsel Ollé and Sesé Abogados and lawyers tied to the Guernica Centre for International Justice are collectively serving as private prosecutors in this case. The trial's initiation is occurring in the wake of a January 2020 decision by the United States to establish 13 individuals and their families as ineligible to enter the country because of their involvement in the extrajudicial killings of the Jesuits and their two companions, among other human rights abuses. By June 2020, only one defendant in the Spanish case—former Colonel Inocente Montano—was still in custody, facing murder and state terrorism charges. Former Lieutenant of the Salvadoran Army Yussy René Mendoza Vallecillos (another former defendant) was





set to appear virtually as a witness for the prosecution. Besides Montano, whose extradition by Spain from the United States proceeded in 2017, the other defendants at this time were presumed to have been living in El Salvador (the requests to the Salvadoran government for extradition to Spain had not been fulfilled at the time). By September 11, 2020, the National Court of Spain decided that Montano was guilty of “five counts of murder of a terrorist nature,” marking a culmination of decades of work by many actors, including the international Jesuit community, eyewitnesses, lawyers, and the victims’ families. This event also symbolizes a milestone for the legal notion of “universal jurisdiction.” In their effort to stress the massacre’s historical/political context, the prosecution team referred to documentary evidence, testimonies, and expert analysis. Beyond offering historical context, declassified documents clearly showed the military’s culpability despite a sprawling attempted coverup. Montano’s conviction entails a sentence of 133 years in prison, or 26 years and eight months for each of the victims addressed in the case.

In January 2022, the Supreme Court of El Salvador decided to reopen an investigation into the UCA murders case; Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado had previously pushed to reopen said case. This reopening occurred after a 2019 roadblock: a lower court had decided that an investigation could proceed regarding the involvement of former President Alfredo Cristiani and a group of military officers in the massacre, but this investigation was halted in 2019 when the officers appealed the case to the country’s Supreme Court. As of January 2022, the former President Cristiani continued to deny knowledge of, or involvement in, the assassination plan. This advancement was somewhat counteracted by a November 2022 development, involving a Salvadoran court’s decision to release Colonel Benavides from prison due to his recent completion of a third of his sentence and his advanced age.





## Bibliography

### Sources used:

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/>

<https://clas.berkeley.edu/jesuits-massacre-trial-return-accountability-human-rights-violations>

<https://www.justsecurity.org/70692/after-20-years-of-impunity-the-jesuits-massacre-trial-communications-in-spain/>

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/human-rights/2020-09-11/guilty-justice-for-the-jesuits-el-salvador>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/el-salvador-court-re-opens-investigation-1986-massacre-jesuit-priests-rcna11182>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/el-salvador-court-frees-army-officer-behind-jesuit-massacre-2022-11-15/>

### The Center for Justice and Accountability Resources regarding legal cases:

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/related-resources/facts-of-the-case/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/related-resources/legal-issues/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/related-resources/salvadoran-supreme-court-releases-high-commanders-indicted-in-spain-for-1989-jesuits-massacre/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/related-resources/spanish-judge-issues-indictments-and-arrest-warrants-in-jesuits-massacre-case/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/related-resources/spanish-national-court-hears-expert-testimony-in-the-jesuits-massacre-case/>





<https://cja.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/MontanoPlea2.pdf>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/uscourt-immigration-fraud/u-s-indicts-jesuits-massacre-defendant-inocente-orlando-montano-for-immigration-fraud-based-on-concealing-human-rights-abuses/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/uscourt-immigration-fraud/u-s-arrests-former-salvadoran-official-and-massachusetts-resident-for-immigration-fraud-related-to-1989-jesuits-massacre/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/uscourt-immigration-fraud/understanding-the-montano-sentencing-process-for-the-crimes-of-immigration-fraud-and-perjury/>

<https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-jesuits-massacre-case/uscourt-extradition/trial-updates/>

Link to Video from Ignacio's brother, Carlos Martín-Baró: <https://youtu.be/Tg5Kx5oPc4A>

**The following sources dive deeper into the life and work of Ignacio Martín-Baró. Grounded by his dedication to liberation psychology and advocating for the well-being of individuals affected by social injustices, each reading reflects varying perspectives of the life and work of Martín-Baró.**

The Road to Spain: The Jesuit Massacre and the Struggle Against Impunity in El Salvador by Almudena Bernabeu and Carolyn Patty Blum (Center for Justice and Accountability, San Francisco, California. 2012.)

The above article traces the trials and tribulations in seeking justice for the 1989 assassination of Ignacio Martín-Baró in El Salvador. In doing so it relays the current status of the legal proceedings regarding the defendants in El Salvador and in the United States.

The University for Social Change and the Legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J. by Joaquin M. Chavez (Trinity College) *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(1), 68–76.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026866>

This article describes the intellectual legacy of Martín-Baró that inspired the new relationship among universities, societies, and politics, which ultimately informed their individual and collective work as scholars, educators, and social activists.





Dykstra, W. (2014). Liberation psychology—A history for the future. *The Psychologist*, 27(11), 888-891.  
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/bc.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/liberation-psychology-history-future/docview/1683363320/se-2>

This article discusses the emergence of liberation psychology and the impact of Martín-Baró's contributions to the context of political and social upheaval throughout Central and South America.

Goodman, D. M., Walling, S., & Ghali, A. A. (2010). Psychology in pursuit of justice: The lives and works of Emmanuel Levinas and Ignacio Martín-Baró. *Pastoral Psychology*, 59(5), 585-602.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-009-0260-4>

Following a case study format, the authors use the lives and works of continental philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró to exemplify the recognition that justice must be centrally integrated into psychological thought and practice.

Levine, B. E., Karlin, M., Levine, B. E. L. B. E., Wadi, R., Engler, M., LaForge, J., Zhang, S., Walker, C., Goodman, A., Ludwig, M., Giorno, T., & Corbett, J. (2014, November 16). *Why an assassinated psychologist - ignored by US psychologists - is being honored*. Truthout.  
<https://truthout.org/articles/why-an-assassinated-psychologist-ignored-by-us-psychologists-is-being-honored/?tmpl=component&print=1>

In this article, authors unpack the controversial attitudes US psychologists had towards Martín-Baró and how his popularization of liberation psychology encouraged adjustments to an unjust societal status quo and energized oppressed people to resist injustices.

Lykes, M. B. (2012). One Legacy Among Many: The Ignacio Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights at 21 *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(1), 88-95.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026982>

The article looks back on the Martín-Baró Fund's 21 years of activities, including fundraising, grant making, education, and advocacy, with the aim of highlighting important aspects of community-based psychological practice. It delves into specific projects that the Fund has supported and draws on Martín-Baró's writings to explore ideas related to liberatory psychology in the context of armed conflict, and ultimately discusses the ongoing challenges that the Fund faces.

Lykes, M. B. & Sibley, E. (2014). Liberation Psychology and Pragmatic Solidarity: North-South Collaborations Through The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 20(3), 209-226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000045>

The article examines the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, a Jesuit scholar and social psychologist, and his contributions to the fields of liberation psychology, community mental





health, and human rights. Specifically, it focuses on his rethinking of trauma within the context of severe human rights abuses and considers how this perspective can be applied to help societies that are recovering from armed conflicts.

Lykes, M. B., & McGillen, G. G. (2021). Remembering Ignacio Martín-Baró: provocations and insights towards liberating psychology in the twenty-first century. *Decoloniality and epistemic justice in contemporary community psychology*, 79-99.

The above article addresses ontological and epistemological assumptions, limiting institutional practices, and problems of professional self-interest that Martín-Baró challenged and that persist within the discipline today.

Ouellette, S. (2012) [Symposium on the Life and Work of Ignacio Martín-Baró: Introduction and Reflections](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026981) *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(1), 62-67. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026981>

This article takes historical, social psychological, legal approaches, and narrative life history describing the range of Ignacio Martín-Baró's life's work and contributions.

Portillo, N. (2012). The life of Ignacio Martín-Baró: A narrative account of a personal biographical journey. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 18(1), 77-87.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027066>

The above essay sheds light on the intricate connections between vital experiences of Martín-Baró's life and his choices as a social scientist. This is observed through a compilation of interviews with relatives, colleagues, and close friends and archival material, including Martín-Baró's personal and family records.

Simalchik, J. (2021). Disrupting Legacies of Trauma: Interdisciplinary Interventions for Health and Human Rights. *Health and Human Rights*, 23(1), 11-26.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27040032>

The above article expands on how Martín-Baró's analysis of psychosocial trauma continues to hold relevance upon understanding the legacy of historical events and mitigating harm to health in various contemporary contexts.

Waeny, M. F. C., & Macêdo, C. M. V. D. (2019). THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT: EL SALVADOR AND IGNÁCIO MARTÍN-BARÓ. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, 31.

The objective of the following article is to present historical data about El Salvador and the region, to demonstrate the importance of the historical context and how they can broaden the understanding about the thought and work of Martín-Baró, as well as his proposal about the role of the psychologist in this scenario.

## **SPANISH:**





Aguilar, M. P. V. [Entre la fría objetividad y la calidad empatía Un acercamiento al legado y proyecto de Ignacio Martín-Baró.](#)

This article holistically recounts the contributions of Ignacio Martín-Baró to the concept of liberationism within the emergence of various social, political, and epistemological movements in the middle of the 20th century.

Burton, M. (2004). *La psicología de la liberación: aprendiendo de América Latina\**. from <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/726/72610406.pdf>

Liberation Social Psychology (PSL) has been developed by a movement of psychologists in Latin America over the past decade, and this article explores the context in which it grew from the works of Ignacio Martín-Baró and his subsequent study by Maritza Montero, among others.

Escalera, C. L. (2020). Treinta años sin Martín-Baró: una breve revisión conceptual. *Revista Epistemología, Psicología y Ciencias Sociales*, 3, 15-32.

This article highlights the validity of the revision of Martín-Baró's thought, thirty years after his death. Here, they briefly summarize what his three essential elements for the construction of a Psychology of Liberation: a new horizon, a new epistemology and a new praxis.

[Goncalves, Mariana Alves. \(2020\). Martín-Baró como una Inspiración Ética para la Construcción de una Perspectiva Comunitaria y Popular en Psicología. \*Estud. pesqui. psicol.\* \[online\]. 20\(2\), pp. 651-664. ISSN 1808-4281. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12957/epp.2020.52591>.](#)

The above article explores the contributions of Ignacio Martín-Baró through systematizing the main points of his writings that serve as an ethical and political inspiration for us to build a community and popular perspective in psychology.

Gondra, J. M. (2017). La ética como praxis transformadora en la Psicología de la Liberación de Ignacio Martín-Baró. [Ethics as a transforming praxis in Ignatius Martín-Baró's Psychology of Liberation] *Revista De Historia De La Psicología*, 38(1), 2-10. <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2017a1>

This article focuses on the school notes that Martín-Baró wrote for the course of professional ethics he taught at the José Simeón Cañas Central American University (UCA), San Salvador, El Salvador. After rejecting the positivistic and idealistic ethics, he advocates a more global, practical and social approach.

Martín, C. (2021). *Diálogos con Ignacio Martín-Baró sobre conflicto y polarización social*. Recuperado de: <http://hdl.handle.net/10554/54587>.

This book highlights conversations between Carlos Martín Beristain and Ignacio Martín-Baró on the topics of conflict and social polarization.







Palma, Cristian. (2020). Recuperar el legado de Martín-Baró: psicología social de la guerra. *Psicología para América Latina*, (33), 53-65. Recuperado em 03 de fevereiro de 2023, de [http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1870-350X2020000100007&lng=pt&tlng=es](http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-350X2020000100007&lng=pt&tlng=es).

Building on the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró to the field of liberation psychology, this article dives into the psychological praxis applied to the contextualization of history.

Pavón-Cuéllar, D. (2015). [Por la objetividad y contra la imparcialidad: el compromiso en la reflexión epistemológica de Ignacio Martín-Baró. \*Teoría y Crítica de la Psicología\*, \(6\), 12-25.](#)

The article explores Ignacio Martín-Baró's views on objectivity and impartiality in psychology, highlighting the contrasting ways in which he treats these two important epistemic principles.

Rubilar Solis, L. (1998). Ignacio Martín-Baró: emblematic figure of Latin American social psychology. *Journal of Psychology*, 7, pp. 81-88. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0581.1998.18763>

By placing this biobibliographical portrait within the specific psychosocial and political context of the Salvadoran people, and extending its relevance to the larger Latin American region (as demonstrated in "Social Psychology from Central America I and II" published between 1983 and 1989), the aim of this article is to revive and reinvigorate Ignacio Martín-Baró's scientific, social, and humanitarian legacy.

