

CONFLICT TEXTILES



Embracing Human Rights: Conflict Textiles' Journey

POSAR FIL A L'AGULLA / Hands On: An arpillera made out of commitment

Catalonian/Spanish arpillera, [Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc arpilleristas group](#), 2015

Photo Roser Corbera

Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc collection, Catalonia / Spain

"Hands On" is a collective arpillera of over 200 characters portraying the life of Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc. From 2013 – 2015, 11 women - arpilleristas, volunteers and participants - sewed the daily life of this diverse organisation.

Unlike the mountain framed Chilean arpilleras, here the concrete buildings of Sant Roc dominate the background. In the foreground, to the left, a busy street scene is visible: children play, celebration banners are displayed and people buy and sell at the craft market; all examples of Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc's involvement in the local community.

To the right we see the many activities facilitated by Fundació. Spanish classes, computer workshops and cultural activities are in full swing. The toy library, children playing, mother and child group, health care and recycling all convey the sense of an organisation enabling participants to share in the cultural life of their neighbourhood - **Article 27** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), fulfil their duties to the community and take responsibility for respecting the rights of others (**Article 29**).

Vida en Nuestra Población / Life in Our Poor Neighbourhood

Chilean arpillera, [Taller Recoleta](#), 1982

Photo Colin Peck

Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance Marta and Jürgen Schaffer, Germany

Created in the second half of the Pinochet dictatorship, this arpillera portrays daily life in this bustling neighbourhood. Poverty and lack of access to basic services force people to source electricity by tapping into the main power supply. Despite this inequality - which contravenes **Article 1** of the UDHR relating to freedom and equality in dignity and rights - they are fully engaged in their community. We see a wedding, a rodeo, children playing, a woman crying, women doing household chores and people cultivating their crops; all contributing to the fabric of daily life.

Since its creation, this arpillera has traversed continents; from Chile to Germany, Northern Ireland, Brazil, Japan and Argentina. On its global journey it has inspired and challenged viewers to reflect on the resilience, ingenuity and survival tactics of communities such as this whose human rights and freedoms have been severely curtailed by the state.



Peace Quilt - Common Loss

Northern Ireland quilt, [Irene MacWilliam](#), 1996

Photo Martin Melaugh

Irene MacWilliam collection

In this quilt, Irene expresses her deep concern for the lives lost during The Troubles, which impacted on every county and community in her native Northern Ireland. As the work began to take shape, people from various locations - Northern Ireland, Japan, the USA and England - sent her scraps of red fabric for inclusion. Each piece represents one of the more than 3000 people who died as a result of the conflict between 1969 and 1994. The white birds in some of the pieces represent the dove of peace; the teddy bear in another scrap reminds us of the many children who suffered from the loss of loved ones.

Whilst the legacy of this 30 year conflict still remains for individuals and society as a whole, cross community projects across Northern Ireland persist in addressing its legacy and working to build a peaceful society for present and future generations. They persist so that UDHR **Article 3** – the right to life, liberty and security of person – becomes a realisable right; a right denied to the 3000+ people remembered in this quilt.



Landmines

German arpillera, [Heidi Drahota](#), 2014

Photo Martin Melaugh

Heidi Drahota collection, Germany

Antipersonnel landmines, when detonated, cause horrific injuries, resulting in amputations, long hospital stays and extensive rehabilitation. Their devastating impact prompted Heidi to create this arpillera.

Afghanistan is cited as one of the most mined countries in the world. The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) notes that whilst more than 730,000 anti-personnel mines have been cleared since 1989, an estimated 30,000 people have been either hurt or killed by explosive devices in the same period.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032141> (February 2019).

Through Heidi's connections with Afghani women she was deeply affected by the impact on children who are: *"...innocent victims of the actions of adults and governments"*. Many of these Afghani children would have unwittingly picked up a "butterfly" mine during the Soviet occupation, which resembled a butterfly or toy. The image of a playful child about to pick up a fluttering butterfly, which will have life-shattering consequences, is a grim testament to the futility of war and combat.

For these children and their families, freedom of movement within their own land is severely restricted; **Article 13** of the UDHR – the freedom to live and travel freely within state borders – is unattainable.

Ônde estão nossos direitos? / Where are our rights?

Brazilian arpillera, [Women of the Movement of People Affected by Dams \(MAB\)](#), 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh
Conflict Textiles collection

Eleven women victims of dam construction in various regions of Brazil ask: "Where are our rights?", inspired by the question posed in the Chilean arpillera "¿Dónde están?/ Where are they?"

Here we see the Brazilian map encased in a dam with the denial of several human rights depicted: loss of land, privatization of the river, an increase in violence against women, human trafficking and sex work, and the weakening of community infrastructure due to forced displacement (UDHR **Articles 12, 17, 24, and 25**).

In 2006, Brazil's Council for Defence of Human Rights (CDDPH) created a special commission to investigate the treatment of the populations affected by dams through seven study cases. In October 2010, the commission concluded that the current methods of dam construction in Brazil resulted in: *"recurring human rights' violations, which ultimately worsen already serious existing social inequalities resulting in increased poverty and disintegration of individuals, families and society"*.

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/letter-from-the-alliance-in-defense-of-the-rivers-of-the-amazon-to-president-dilma-3076>

Marcha de las mujeres de los mineros / March of the miners' wives, daughters and sisters

Peruvian arpillera, Mujeres Creativas workshop, 1985

Replica, [TL, Mujeres Creativas workshop](#), 2008

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

In this replica of the 1985 original, we see that TL, like other Peruvian arpilleristas has followed the Chilean arpillerista tradition. As Cooke, Zetlin & MacDowell observe in the 2005 Weavings of War exhibition catalogue: *"... [they used] pictorial patchwork as a vehicle for political activism, ... church parishes for workshops, ...the same overseas trading relationships with human rights organisations... They made an unfamiliar textile form their own"* (p21).

In 2011, fellow Peruvian arpillerista María Herrera, gave an insight into the marches depicted in this arpillera in the course of a phone call with curator Roberta Bacic: *"Many men, women and children [did] these sacrifice marches, walking for many days ... to Lima ...to protest against the shameful working conditions in the mining camps. Once in Lima they collected money and organised soup kitchens in order to survive"*.

Through these marches they denounced the human rights violations endured in their work and demanded their right to a fair wage as articulated in **Article 23** of the UDHR.

Ausencias - Presencias 2 / Absences – Presences 2

Argentinean arpillera, Mirta Zak, 2015

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

Forced disappearances and illegal arrests characterised the Videla dictatorship in Argentina, 1976 - 1983. The Nunca Más (Never Again) report (1984) by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons estimate that up to 9000 cases of forced disappearance and other human rights violations were perpetrated and conclude the real figure to be much higher. Approximately 30% of victims were women.

<http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain001.htm>

Abducted pregnant women who gave birth in detention centres were generally killed and their babies illegally adopted by military or political families. These atrocities seeded the beginnings of the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo in 1977, an organization which highlighted and investigated the disappearances of their children and grandchildren. <https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/history.htm>

In this arpillera these grandmothers march around the obelisk in front of the government buildings in Plaza de Mayo. Every Thursday, for over forty years, they continue to march, demanding answers, denouncing the disappearances of their loved ones and the denial of their right to life, liberty and security, **Article 3** of the UDHR, and their legal rights – presumption of innocence, a fair trial, freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention - **Articles 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11**.

Nos hacen falta / We miss them

Mexican arpillera, [Rosa Borrás](#), 2017

Photo Rosa Borrás

Courtesy of Rosa Borrás

On September 26th 2014, 43 students from Ayotzinapa teacher training college in Guerrero, Southern Mexico were abducted by municipal police, en route to a protest – exercising their right freedom of expression, spreading information and peaceful assembly, **Articles 19** and **20** of the UDHR. Their disappearance and subsequent government handling of the case has drawn worldwide condemnation and seen vast numbers of people demonstrating; demanding answers, resignations and an end to collusion between drug cartels and government officials.

<https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2014/12/11/mexico-kidnapping>

This textile, marking the third anniversary of their disappearance, was Rosa's response to: *"... the young students and their parents, the pain they feel ... the lack of justice, the lies that the government has told"*.

Her iconic image embraces the loss and harbours *"a seed"* for the future *"... branches full of leaves, [signifying] that this terrible event was the ground for social movements ... about the ... violence we are living in my country."*

Rosa is hopeful that: *"people connect with [this piece] ... feel empathy for the students and their families"* and that *"it helps to prevent something like this happening again"*.

Reflections on violence

English arpillera, [Linda Adams](#), 2009

Photo Colin Peck

Conflict Textiles collection (new material to be added)

This arpillera depicts the “Free Tibet” protest in London in 2008 when the Olympic torch was carried through the city on its way to Beijing. The demonstrators, displaying their placards against Chinese oppression in Tibet and waving Tibetan flags, were kept behind barriers, closely guarded by Chinese security personnel and British police.

Linda, who took part in the protest with her daughter, was appalled at the treatment of protesters highlighting repression and denial of freedom of belief in Tibet (**Article 18**, UDHR): “...*anything in the way was violently pushed to one side... The violence was sickening...*”

Seeing this event portrayed as an insignificant news item prompted Linda to create this arpillera: “*to add my voice to the protests, to say ‘This is what I saw’.*”

Ten years later in April 2019, Linda revisited this piece and recorded her reflections in a written message. Mirroring the style of the early Chilean arpillera she has concealed it in a small pocket on the reverse side of the arpillera.

Irene, Marta, Hilda, Patricia: Ahora y Siempre Presentes / Irene, Marta, Hilda, Patricia: Now and Always Present

Argentinean arpillera, [Students from Escuela de Cerámica](#), 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

In March 1976 a military junta led by Lieutenant General Videla seized power in Argentina and initiated a seven year period of military dictatorship, characterised by severe human rights violations. In May 1977 four young female students from Escuela de Cerámica / Pottery College, disappeared without trace. One of them was pregnant. Marta Virginia Esain, Patricia Virginia Villa, Hilda Adriana Fernandez and Irene Monica Bruschtein, aged 21-25, active in the socialist movement, were all taken from different places. Irene was abducted from her home in front of her two children.

Almost 40 years later the college remembers these young women through this arpillera created by present day students. They sewed it after visiting the exhibition "TESTIMONIAL SCRAPS: arpilleras from Chile and other parts of the world" in Buenos Aires, 2013.

The title phrase is testimony to the enduring legacy of these young women, whose right to life, liberty and security of person; to marry and start a family – **Article 3 and 16** of the UDHR – was denied by the state.

La Cueca Sola / Dancing Cueca alone

Chilean arpillera, [Anonymous](#), 1989

Photo Tomomitsu Oshima

Oshima Hakko Museum collection, Japan. In the care of Conflict Textiles collection

Here we see women solo dancing the Cueca, Chile's national dance, which represents the different emotions and stages of romance and is traditionally danced in pairs. These women dance alone, with sombre expression, dressed in severe black and white, wearing the image of their "disappeared" loved one over their heart. This was their way of publically denouncing the government's actions on human rights abuse, particularly torture and detention – **Articles 5 and 9** of the UDHR – in addition to curtailment of their social and economic rights.

Their courage, defiance and creativity have inspired people all over the world. The Sting song "They dance alone" was based on it and has been performed by many other singers including Joan Baez and Holly Near.

La Cueca Sola, of which there are many versions, remains an iconic symbol of Chilean women's resistance to the oppressive Pinochet regime.

2016 Starvation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean arpillera, [Lakheli Nyanthi](#), 2016

Photo Ukuthula Trust

Enyandeni Peace Centre collection

In February 2016 the Zimbabwean Government declared a state of emergency in response to a prolonged drought. Stemming from El Niño - a cyclical weather pattern of warming in the central and eastern tropical Pacific, more severe than usual – this drought resulted in crop failure, food shortages and severe hardship for people already living a precarious existence.

In this arpillera Lakheli depicts her local situation. She explains: *“In 2016, the rains failed and people ... are facing starvation in some rural areas. The textile shows hungry people and livestock, and a nearly empty dam. ‘Asazi’ means ‘what can we do?’ and ‘iThemba’ means ‘hope’.”*

Almost three years later, following poor rainfall, Cyclone Idai and economic uncertainty, there is little change. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for Zimbabwe projected that 3.58 million people (38%) would face severe acute food insecurity between October and December 2019.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IB_Zimbabwe_Food_Insecurity.pdf

For Lakheli and her community, the gap between **Article 25** of the UDHR – the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being – and their current reality must seem unbridgeable; the right to rest and leisure (**Article 24**) unattainable.

Libertad a los presos políticos / Freedom for the political prisoners

Chilean arpillera, [Anonymous](#), c1985

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance Kinderhilfe arpillera collection, Chile/Bonn

Here we see a group of women protesting outside a prison, demanding better conditions and release of the prisoners within. These women protested by day and stitched by night. Making arpilleras enabled them to highlight the human rights abuses within these prisons, where their loved ones had no access to a fair trial, no presumption of innocence and no protection by the law, (**Articles 8 - 11** of the UDHR).

The powerful effect of this type of political expression was not recognised at first by the military. Ariel Zeitlin Cooke explains: "... *war textiles are largely disregarded by modern military authorities because of their feminine connotations and can therefore be a relatively safe forum for dangerous or provocative ideas*". (Weavings of War exhibition catalogue, 2005)

When the Chilean military finally recognised the political impact of arpilleras, they condemned them as subversive materials and if found they would have been stopped at Customs and destroyed.

Retorno / Return

Colombian arpillera, [Mujeres tejiendo sueños y sabores de paz, Mampuján](#), 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

In March 2000, more than 1,400 civilians, including these 15 arpilleristas were displaced following a brutal massacre by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of right-wing, counter-insurgency paramilitary groups.

In June 2013, through the Victim and Land Restitution law (Victims law 1448) of the Santos government, the displaced of Mampuján had their land rights officially restored, permitting them to return.

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/colombia0913_brochure_web_0.pdf

In this arpillera the women envision their return; some anticipate a utopian type homecoming whilst others are fearful of the challenges ahead. The current reality matches their polarised perspectives. With 40% of the 112,000 claims finalised, the government is declaring the process a success. Claimants and NGOs disagree, citing how threats from the Anti-Land Restitution Army have prevented many people proceeding with claims. With Law 1448 due to expire in 2021 the slow pace of land restitution worries claimants, who fear a return to forced displacement, paramilitary atrocities and a blatant denial of **Article 13** of the UDHR – freedom to live and travel freely within state borders.

(“The slow and bloody road to justice”, New Internationalist 515 September-October 2018)

Legacy of Tyrants / El legado de los tiranos

USA arpillera, [Lisa Raye Garlock](#), 2018

Photo Lisa Raye Garlock

Conflict Textiles collection

Here Lisa expresses her sense of outrage following the 2016 US Presidential election, within a global context of repressive regimes. While rooted in the US, the skull imagery emerged from “...news reports of the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar and the Yazidi genocide in Iraq” They are created from “...heavy canvas, fabric crayons, and embroidered and appliquéd with black lace and red fabric. The lace represents women, [who] often bear the brunt of brutal, patriarchal governments”. Each skull embodies a living person within a family and community.

The number 1,595,000,000 +, is, explains Lisa, the approximate sum of deaths under the 13 most lethal dictatorships of the past 100 years, [Daily Beast](#). (2011). It highlights that **Article 28**, UDHR – the right to an international order where all rights can be fully realised – is aspirational in many jurisdictions.

The imagery, the numbers, the lives behind the numbers, the historical, current, global and US context all converge as a stark reminder of the need to remember the past; a past still present for many communities. Lisa’s final comment urges us to: “...protest [against] current tyrannical regimes... sooner, rather than after it’s too late”.

Cimarrón / Runaway slave

Colombian arpillera, [Mujeres tejiendo sueños y sabores de paz](#), 2010

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

This piece by Mampuján women is rooted in their present and ancestral experience of forced displacement. In a brutal massacre on 11th March 2000, 12 people were killed by the now demobilised United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a coalition of right-wing, counter-insurgency paramilitary groups. More than 1,400 civilians, including these 15 arpilleristas were displaced.

Juana Alicia Ruiz is a survivor of Mampuján. Commenting on this arpillera which depicts state violence against her ancestors, contravening **Article 4**, UDHR – freedom from slavery - she reflects: *“Cimarrón means a black ... slave. It is a textile account of the daily activities and human rights violations of our African ancestors...They rebelled and escaped to the hills of Maria, setting up the palenques where we live now. The big man carries a punishment for a failed attempt to escape. It consists of a piece of tree tied to his shoulders”*.

Through their sewing, these women have found solace, a way to bear witness and a means of denouncing their traumatic experiences, both past and present.

Mi Guernica / My Gernika

Basque Country arpillera, [Edurne Mestraitua](#), 2017

Photo Martin Melaugh

Courtesy of Edurne Mestraitua

In the late afternoon of a busy market day in Gernika on 26th April 1937, the German air force in league with General Franco bombed Gernika. The town was reduced to a smouldering ruin and over 1,650 people were killed, their human right to life, liberty and security of person nullified (**Article 3** of the UDHR).

Edurne's family was deeply affected by this devastating event. Almost 80 years later she has narrated her memories in "Mi Guernica", through workshops facilitated by Idoia Orbe, as part of the exhibition, "COSIENDO PAZ: Conflict, Arpilleras, Memoria / STITCHING PEACE: Conflict, Arpilleras, Memory". In her textile interpretation of Picasso's Gernika, she uses a pillowcase, which is a precious family heirloom, as backing.

She recalls: "My mother as a child lived the terrible bombardment herself, and ... repeated this story again and again. Though my father lived it too, he never spoke about [it]".

LA BODA DE MI HIJA / My daughter's wedding

Catalonian / Spanish arpillera, [Fàtima Mansouri](#), 2017

Photo Ricard Díez

Department of Civil Rights and Gender at Sabadell City Council, Catalonia

Fatima, from Amasija in Northern Turkey, made this arpillera in a workshop titled "Let us sew our rights!" facilitated by Esther Pardo of Sabadell City Council in Catalonia.

She explains the background to her arpillera: *"At the time my daughter got married in Morocco, I could not attend her wedding. That makes me very angry and sad. I could not go I lost my rights to residence because I had to look after my mother in Morocco who had cancer. My arpillera represents the wedding I could not attend"*.

As the immigration law only allows residents to be away for less than six months over a calendar year, Fatima is at present an undocumented person. By exercising her family caring duties, she is now prevented from realising her human right to a nationality in her adopted country, (**Article 15** of the UDHR), the denial of which precludes access to other rights; social security (**Article 22**) and taking part in government (**Article 21**).



Escuelita de Otavalo / Otavalo Primary School

Ecuadorian arpillera, [Anonymous](#), c2008

Photo Colin Peck

Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance Vivienne Barry, Chile

This contemporary arpillera is from Otavalo, a largely indigenous town in the Imbabura province of Ecuador. Indigenous Otavaleños are famous for weaving textiles, which are sold at the Saturday market. This arpillera was bought in 2009 by Chilean filmmaker Vivienne Barry, who is known for her award winning animated short film about the arpillera movement in Chile.

Focused on education this piece brings us inside a classroom. The central image is a woman with braided hair carrying a bag. She may be the teacher of the school, or perhaps the arpillera herself. We also see a row of children and a blackboard bearing the words: *"My little house is the most beautiful in the world"*. It is a simple, yet powerful image, reminding us of our human need for a home and education; needs articulated as human rights in the UDHR (**Articles 26 and 12**), rights which are often denied or inaccessible to people living in conflict zones.



They Fell like Stars from the Sky / Cayeron del cielo como estrellas

Irish arpillera, [Deborah Stockdale](#), 2013

Photo Martin Melaugh

Deborah Stockdale collection

In this arpillera, Deborah remembers the estimated up to 30,000 people who disappeared in Argentina during the Videla dictatorship, 1976–1983; denied access to human rights by the state (**Article 30**) on the basis of their presumed political opinion (**Article 2**). <http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/>

The figures falling through the night sky, each with a small red heart, represent the bodies, sometimes still alive, thrown from aeroplanes. The circle of women are the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo, keeping vigil for their disappeared loved ones. In the middle area (the 'water' area) and on the reverse side, tangible memories are encapsulated - a tablecloth, photograph and letters. These are from Miguel Angel de Boer's young wife, María Haydée Rabuñal, a medical student, who was 'disappeared' in the 1970s.

Integrating these three strands afforded Deborah: *"a way of comprehending the absolute scale of this tragedy for the people of Argentina"*.

Represión a los Mapuche / Repression of the Mapuche

Chilean arpillera, [Pamela Luque](#), 2015

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

The Mapuche indigenous people in the Araucanía region of Southern Chile have endured colonisation for well over 500 years, first at the hands of the Spanish settlers and later by the Chilean state. Land struggles and demanding restitution of their former lands are ongoing issues for the indigenous Mapuche.

Chilean Pamela Luque, living in Ireland for 20 years, created this arpillera after viewing a video clip of the aftermath of a Mapuche demonstration in 2012. Here we see the police entering the home of Guillermina Painevilu and her daughter Susanna, both onlookers at the demonstration. In front of Susanna's children the police strike the Grandmother and forcibly remove her daughter, a flagrant denial of their privacy and their right to home and family life - **Article 12** of the UDHR. For Pamela, this epitomises: *"how the Mapuche, particularly women are ... targeted by the police"*.

In the background we see hills dotted with the ancient Arucaria (monkey puzzle) trees, and the words of a Mapuche poem, illustrating their deep connection to the land: *"Don't imprison me ... let my rivers flow ... let the blossoming freedom return."*

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No tenemos acceso a los servicios públicos / We have no access to public services

Chilean arpillera, [Anonymous](#), 1984

Photo Colin Peck

Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance Heidi and Peter Gessler, Switzerland

Through this arpillera made in a community workshop in Santiago, we journey back to the 1980s and witness the daily hardships faced by this community during the Pinochet regime. The crosses stitched on the doors of public services show that ordinary people are denied access to these facilities. Signs beside the minister's desk proclaim: "Minister of Education, betrayal to the fatherland," and "What is this? They refer to former Justice Minister Monica Madariaga, who drafted the 1978 Amnesty Law (Amnesty to the perpetrators) to avoid legal action in the cases of human rights violation from 1973-1978.

Through a Swiss couple this arpillera journeyed to Europe, where it helped to highlight the grimness of life in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship. Today it invites us to connect with marginalised communities in various jurisdictions that, in the face of repressive regimes and times of conflict, are deprived of basic services; a denial of their human right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being - **Article 25**, UDHR.

Paro de los estudiantes' chilenos 2 / Chilean students' strike 2

Chilean arpillera, [Pamela Lague](#), 2012

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera focuses on the mass student movement in Chile, which in 2011 organised a series of marches and creative actions demanding free education – **Article 26**, UDHR - and reform of the existing economic model. Led by student leader Camila Vallejos, the movement developed strong links to workers unions and gathered public support.

Here we see students exercising their right to peaceful assembly – **Article 20**, UDHR - carrying a placard demanding: "Education-liberty, dignity, no cost". A second placard assures the public that: "We are not doing this because we are terrorists or delinquents but conscientious students", while a third one states: "Kisses in favour of education", highlighting their creative approach. Illustrating the intergenerational support for this movement, another placard reads: "Grandparents support their grandchildren".

This piece draws on the techniques of the early Chilean arpilleristas, which Pamela learned as a young woman in Chile. Depicting the student protests in Chile; a country where grassroots resistance was immortalised in arpilleras a few decades ago, is testimony to the enduring power of arpilleras.

En el lado “bueno” de la valla 2 / On the “Good Side” of the Fence 2

Spanish arpillera, [Antonia Amador](#), 2016

Photo Roser Corbera

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera depicts the perilous sea journey undertaken by people fleeing their homelands in Africa and Asia, seeking asylum from persecution - **Article 14**, UDHR. Since 2015, more than 1.4 million people have boarded unseaworthy boats in a desperate attempt to reach Greece, Italy and Spain en route to Europe. <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>. Not all survive. In 2018, of the 58,600 who made the sea crossing to Spain, 777 perished.

https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67712#_ga=2.74278162.1846643836.1551099833-501375489.1550664532 (p8)

Antonia expresses her outrage through a letter tucked in her arpillera: *“On the “good” side of the fence [shows] that ... on the boat they never thought they would find their death”. They “believed they [were coming] to paradise...[but] it was the Police that awaited them...”*.

Such a system, where the odds are stacked against those fleeing persecution prompts Antonia to conclude: *“... in the XXI century human rights are not respected....We all have the right to a dignified life, no matter where you come from”*.

No más contaminación / No more pollution

Chilean arpillera, [Anonymous](#), c1985

Photo Martin Melaugh

Conflict Textiles collection. Provenance Robert Miller, USA

This arpillera opens a window into the life of a poor shantytown in the suburbs of Santiago in the 1980s. Affected by pollution and the fumes of cars and public transport, the community is taking action. A number of people are displaying a banner that reads: “No more smog.” Others are trying to protect themselves by wearing a mask. Overall, we see a community galvanised into action.

Over 30 years later, with an increase in the number of vehicles, air pollution still remains an issue in Santiago. As Chilean cities and the global community grapple with the catastrophic impact of environmental pollution, this arpillera starkly reminds us that it is the poor who bear the brunt of environmental in-action. It is the poor whose right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being - **Article 25**, UDHR is most severely impacted.