

¿Dónde están? / Where are they?

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, c. 1985

Roberta Bacic collection

Women protest the disappearances perpetrated by the Pinochet dictatorship, holding a banner asking: “¿Dónde están/Where are they?” The answer to this simple question was repeatedly ignored by the regime. Indifference towards the plight of these women and their families is apparent in this arpillera. The motorist and the pedestrians in the bottom corner avert their faces from the protestors, in denial of the atrocities committed by the Pinochet regime and made public by these women.



Disappeared

Northern Ireland arpillera, Irene MacWilliam, 2013

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera is rooted in outrage at the scale of forced disappearances during Argentina's seven-year military dictatorship (1976-1983). During this period, the number of people believed to have been killed or disappeared, depending on the source, range from 7,158 to 30,000. Figures of people were stitched onto black fabric and then cut through, leaving voids to represent their disappearance. This piece stands at just over two metres tall, representing the height of the tallest man tortured to death by the Argentinean Junta.



The Disappeared

Northern Ireland arpillera, Irene MacWilliam, 2026

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera lists those disappeared from Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1985. The shamrock represents Ireland and the artist has stitched a pocket into the back of the arpillera with replacement numbers, in the hope that the remains of others will be recovered and the number '13' can be changed to reflect this.



The Red Hand of Ulster

Irish wall hanging, Catherine Harper, 2025

On loan from the artist.

Made from used fabrics including christening robes, women's undergarments and dyed gloves, this wall hanging represents the gendered violence often obscured by the conflict in Ireland. This wall hanging represents the abuse, death, and disappearance of children and women in Magdalene Laundries and across Ireland, and the sexual, reproductive, and gender-based violence perpetrated against women and ignored as Irish territory was violently contested.



The Earth Always Remembers / La tierra siempre recuerda

Irish arpillera, Deborah Stockdale, 2018

Conflict Textiles Collection

The 'War on Drugs', declared by former Mexican President Felipe Calderón in 2006, has claimed the lives of over 150,000 people. During that time, some 27,000 people were disappeared, a figure which now exceeds 37,000. This arpillera captures the families of the disappeared forced to search themselves for their loved ones in the absence of state support. The eyes keep vigil, reminding us that "The Earth Always Remembers."



Hornos de Lonquén / Lime kilnso f Lonquén

Chilean arpillera, Anonymous, c. 1979

Conflict Textiles collection

On 7 October 1973, 15 peasant men, from the town of Isla de Maipo, members of an agricultural co-operative, were disappeared. For years, their wives, mothers and daughters went to jails and detention centres, searching for their relatives. On 30 November 1978, following information provided in a secret testimony, the bodies of the 15 men, who had been thrown alive into the lime kiln and died, were found.



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

Argentinian arpillera, Students from Escuela de Cerámica, 2013
Conflict Textiles collection

In 1977, under Argentina's military dictatorship, four young female students from the Escuela de Cerámica, one of whom was pregnant, were disappeared: Marta Virginia Esain, Patricia Virginia Villa, Hilda Adriana Fernandez and Irene Monica Bruschtein. Almost 40 years later the college remembered these young women through this arpillera created by present-day students. The title of the piece is testimony to the enduring legacy.



Minhas memórias da ditadura / My memories of the dictatorship

Brazilian arpillera, Fátima da Costa, 2012

Conflict Textiles collection

This piece was created during a workshop as part of a Chilean arpillera exhibition commissioned by Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo in Brazil, 2011. In it, the artist recalls a period in her hometown of Recife following the 1964 coup d'état: "Suddenly...my parents closed ... their little shop. Lorries loaded with military ... ordered people to lock themselves and be silent. They surrounded the house of Mr. Popô...Mr Popô disappeared..."



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

Irish arpillera, Deborah Stockdale, 2013

Conflict Textiles collection

In this arpillera, the figures falling through the sky represent those disappeared by the Argentinean Junta by being drugged and thrown alive from airplanes into the Río de la Plata. The circle of women are the Abuelas (Grandmothers) de Plaza de Mayo, keeping vigil for their disappeared loved ones. In the middle and on the reverse side, tangible memories are encapsulated - a tablecloth, photograph and letters from María Haydée Rabuñal, a medical student who was 'disappeared' in the 1970s.



Who is down the mine shaft? Bhalagwe 1984

Zimbabwean arpillera, Enyandeni Women's Textile Art Group, 2019
Conflict Textiles collection

This women's group met once a week to remember and denounce the massacres of Zimbabwe's Gukurahundi era (1983-1987). This piece recalls the Ndebele-speakers who, in 1984, were beaten, killed and thrown down mineshafts near Bhalagwe Camp, a notorious detention centre in Matabeleland South. The group's facilitator, Shari Eppel, explained: "We are trying to let the world know that in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, there are still thousands of disappeared people from the 1980s, in need of being found and given a voice."



Cunetas / Ditches

Catalonian arpillera, Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc arpilleristas group, 2020
Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc collection

This arpillera recalls the turbulent era of the Spanish civil war and its aftermath (1936-39), a period in which some 500,000 people lost their lives. The arpilleristas use their needles, threads, and hands to tap into their memories and take us deep into the earth to remember and advocate for those killed during this period and buried in mass graves, yet to be found.



Nuestros/as desaparecidos/as / Our Disappeared

Chilean arpillera, Violeta Morales, 1988

Conflict Textiles collection

This arpillera depicts six placards that could be used in non-violent street action. Each features the face of a disappeared person framed by the question “¿Dónde están?” (“Where are they?”). This protest arpillera demands answers; it demands truth and justice for the detained - disappeared, the executed and those imprisoned and tortured during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973 - 1990).



“Here Algerians were drowned” / “Aquía hogaron a los Argelinos”

Chilean arpillera, Daniela Pizarro Torres (Dani Negri), 2026

Conflict Textiles collection

The arpillera reflects on the 17th October 1961 in Paris, when dozens of Algerians were thrown by police into the Seine and drowned. The red color of the arpillera refers to a red-tinged Seine river. Maps appliquéd with red thread detail traces of the colonial footprints: ridges laden with blood and violence. In creating this arpillera the artist reflected on the experience of disappearance in her home country of Chile, and the need for civil society to denounce impunity.



Longing & In Front of the State Palace

Indonesian hardcopy posters, Alit Ambara, 2017

Conflict Textiles collection

Longing portrays military units that kidnapped numerous pro-democracy activists in Indonesia, 1997-1998. The families of the victims would protest in front of the Indonesian state palace in Jakarta to call for justice on their behalf.

In Front of the State Palace portrays the families of those who perished in May 1998, those who were victims of enforced disappearances and kidnappings, and those who were the victims of political violence committed during Indonesia's New Order administration. They continue to demand justice.

