



The Human Cost of War

## Foreword

Quilt making and textiles have long been entwined in the history of this city. It is in this context that the Heritage and Museum Service first began working with Roberta Bacic in 2007 as we researched and prepared for the exhibition 'The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts'. The resulting friendships and partnership projects that have developed have been quite astounding. Groups across Northern Ireland and Europe continue to work together and exhibit textiles and artwork to celebrate and remember, often coinciding with International Women's Day.

Women all over the world have worked with textiles and fabrics for many generations, for many different reasons and in many different ways. They have made items for their own use, for decoration, warmth or as a source of income, but have also used fabrics to tell personal stories of conflict and struggle. Sue Prichard, in the catalogue for a recent exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum ('Quilts 1700-2010, Hidden Histories, Untold Stories'), said (p9) 'Quilts stimulate memories of warmth, security and comfort'.

This new exhibition, 'The Human Cost of War' includes over twenty quilts and arpilleras that illustrate the impact of war and speak to us about difficult and often controversial subjects.

Most of the pieces are accompanied with personal narratives, as can be seen in this catalogue. They range from across the globe from Northern Ireland where the potency of the voice from the past is captured in Irene MacWilliam's, powerful images of those killed during the Troubles, to Chile where the memories of the disappeared, are expressed through simple textiles which are often more powerful than words alone. We hope visitors are challenged by the exhibition and find it thought-provoking, whilst also considering the importance of preserving memories and documenting a person's history and heritage.

**Bernadette Walsh, Archivist, Heritage & Museum Service, Derry City Council**

# Introduction

Late in 2008 I was commissioned to curate this exhibition by the Movement of the Abolition of War and it was first seen at the Imperial War Museum in London as part of Remembrance 2009 commemorations on 8 November. It then was exhibited at St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace and ended at the Whitechapel Art Gallery as part of The Nature of the Beast exhibition by Goshka Macuga.

It is meaningful to bring it back to Derry City Council Heritage & Museum Service in a revival that includes new pieces and addresses new issues, as it was here in 2008 that the 'The Art of Survival, International and Irish Quilts' collection generated a series of arpilleras and quilt exhibitions. These have travelled the world and opened new opportunities to look into testimonies of war and conflict as expressed through sewing, something women have done for thousands of years in their homes and whose voices have not been listened to in the public domain.

Since March 2008 – the Verbal Arts Centre has hosted a permanent rotating textile exhibition with pieces from local and international artists. As part of 'The Human Cost of War' an installation on Afghanistan will be at the Verbal Arts Centre and the German artist Heidi Drahota, who will be exhibiting at the Tower Museum, will also show work with children in Germany. She will be acting as artist in residence for the week commencing November 8<sup>th</sup> and different activities will take place while she is in the city.

Submerge yourself in these pieces; look into their stories, listen to what they tell us, explore where we are in relation to them and the world they represent, and ask yourself: 'What can we do about this?'

**Roberta Bacic, curator of this exhibition, November 2010.**

The photos are by Martin Melaugh, Colin Peck, Tony Boyle and Claus Sperr.

For more information on quilt and arpillera exhibitions since February 2008, visit the digital archive on [www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts](http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/quilts).

# Common loss: 3000+ dead between 1969 and 1994

Four-panel quilt made by Irene MacWilliam

In this quilt, Irene MacWilliam expresses her deep concern for the loss of lives in the conflict known as the Troubles in her native Northern Ireland. More than 3000 people died during the conflict between 1969 and 1994. Each piece of red fabric, which is torn for effect, represents a dead person. There is a tiny teddy bear in some, symbolising a dead child.

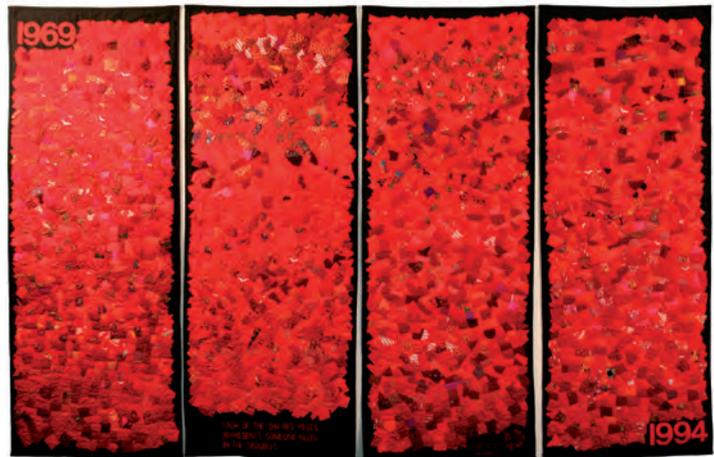
Although Irene did not suffer any personal tragedy during the Troubles, her sensitivity to the loss of others in all conflicts is boundless and has touched a chord in many people. As the quilt began to take shape, people from around the world as well as Northern Ireland sent pieces of red fabric. The contributions came from Japan, the USA and England, among other far flung countries.

Courtesy of the artist

1.50 x 2.30 m



Detail



## Executed at dawn

Made by Irene MacWilliam

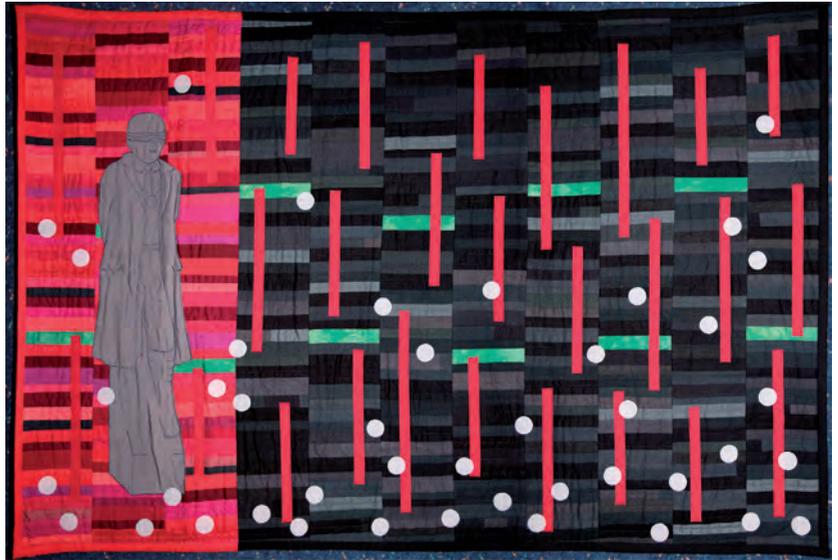
Irene made this quilt as a personal tribute to a group of soldiers who, in the First World War, were shot at dawn for alleged cowardice. They were pardoned and exonerated many years later, after much effort by their families and friends.

Irene said: 'When I first read about the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, I was shocked. I read the stories of these soldiers on the internet and I was moved by them. Many were so very young; some had lied about their age so they could join up. They had no idea what war would be like.'

The compelling nature of this quilt inspired the exhibition title of 'The human cost of war'.

Courtesy of the artist

0.73 x 1.11 m



# Lost children of war

Arpillera made by Irene MacWilliam, 2009

Irene MacWilliam was deeply moved by the posters being circulated at one time to help families find each other after being separated and displaced by war. She was especially concerned about the lost children, some of whom were so young that they could not give people helping them any information to assist the search. She made this arpillera to depict their desperation.

Irene made the children almost transparent so as not to show any nationality or race and to express that they are living a half life. They are like 'ghost' children.

Irene has said: 'I chose to focus on children rather than adults since the image of a distressed child is very emotive'.

Courtesy of the artist

0.30 x 0.50 m



Detail



# Northern Ireland Peace Quilt

A patchwork quilt made by Women Together

Women Together was founded in 1970 to unite Protestant and Catholic women in working for peace and a better life in Northern Ireland. Its aims:

- end sectarian violence in Northern Ireland
- give support to victims of violence
- allow women a voice in society
- create a society rooted in mutual understanding and respect for diversity

Among other activities they made quilts. Pat Campbell, who acts as coordinator, said about the quilt on display:

'It is the product of the work of women and women's organisations all over Ireland, with one panel from Scotland. The patches on the quilt reflect the key elements of what is required for peace. We, as women directly affected, many of us bereaved, wish to have contributed to the peace process and stop the violence'.

Courtesy Pat Campbell

# EQUALITY

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# PEACE

# No going back

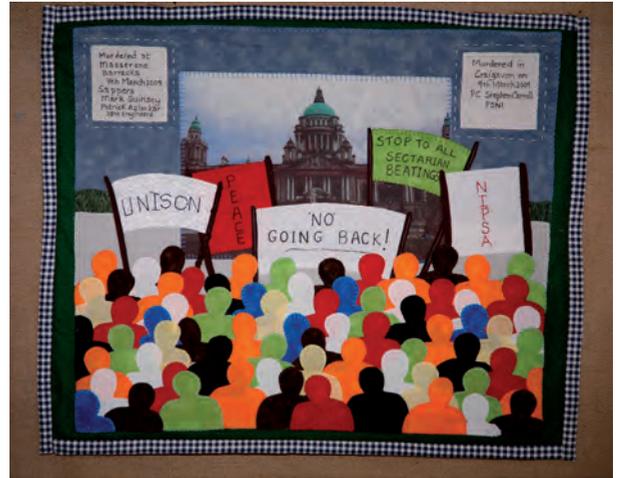
Northern Ireland arpillera by Sonia Copeland

This arpillera, the first made by long-time quilter Sonia Copeland, came about when it looked like the hard-won peace in Northern Ireland was threatened by three killings in early 2009.

Sonia has stated: 'My piece shows the Belfast City Hall, and in the foreground, a representation of one of the cross-community demonstrations, which followed the murders of Constable Stephen Carroll and Sappers Mark Quinsy and Patrick Asimkar by so called "Republican terrorists". This demonstration of support and solidarity for the victims and their families was important to me personally as I had served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the worst years of the Troubles and had suffered as a result of terrorist attacks on four occasions. It seemed to me that the peace that was won with so much pain and suffering was once again to be snatched away. I resolved that nothing and no one would steal from my children the right to a peaceful life, which was stolen from me and my generation'.

Courtesy of the artist

0.45 x 0.56 m



# Walking to death

Small quilt by Helen Heron

This small quilt was inspired by a poem of F. S. Flint and created by Helen Heron for an exhibition in Bangor, County Down in January 2003. The poem was written during the First World War when, in order to get to the front to record their experiences, war poets and correspondents had to enlist as serving soldiers. Flint saw a friend marching towards the front and could not warn him of the dangers because he was under an order of silence.

The gun-carrying soldiers in the quilt have blank faces. They are anonymous, walking to their death as did the huge numbers who died in that war.

Helen works in many forms of textile art and exhibits widely. She became interested in the history of the Irish who fought in the First World War and her study resulted in this small quilt.

Courtesy of the artist

0.87 x 0.57 m



# Encadenamiento / Women chained to Parliament gates

Chilean arpillera, anon.



In this arpillera, women have chained themselves to the gates in front of the Congress building in public protest against what was happening, particularly the disappearance of their loved ones at the hands of the ruler's armed forces.

It was made in the late 1980s in one of the workshops run by Vicaría de la Solidaridad. Many of the women had never sewn before and found solace in learning the skill and working together. Moreover, supporters encouraged them by selling their work at home and abroad. This gave them badly needed income and, at the same time, made public their plight and actions.

Courtesy Sean Carroll, USA

0.51 x 0.63 m

## La cueca sola / Dancing cueca alone

Chilean arpillera, anon.

This Chilean arpillera shows women on their own dancing the traditional 'Cueca', which is a dance meant for partners and represents the different emotions and stages of romance. It expresses how these women reacted when pushed to the limit. It was made in one of the workshops of the Association of Detained and Disappeared, probably in the late 1980s, and was acquired in 1991.

The boldness, determination and creativity of the women who made this arpillera has inspired people all over the world. For example, the Sting song 'They dance alone' was based on it and was performed by many other singers including Joan Baez and Holly Near. In June 1986 Amnesty International sponsored a tour of six benefit concerts which included the song and such famous performers as Sting, Bryan Adams, Peter Gabriel, Joan Baez and the Neville Brothers.

Courtesy Gaby Franger & Rainer Huhle, Germany

0.50 x 0.40 m



# Homenaje a los caídos / Homage to the fallen ones

Chilean arpillera, anon.

In this sombre traditional arpillera, there is no sun in the sky and the Andes are one flat colour. Black dominates the foreground. In the background, poor villagers tap into the mains power supply because they cannot afford to pay. The road is lined with candles in remembrance of the disappeared. The central figure carries leaflets protesting against torture. Some women lie in the road. In all, the arpillera gives voice to the sorrow and loss felt by so many.

This work was made in the late 1970s and given as a gift to a university lecturer in Madrid in honour of her work with child soldiers in Angola and other parts of the world. It has been featured in exhibitions since February 2008.

Courtesy Fátima Miralles, Spain

0.38 x 0.50 m



# Paz Justicia Libertad / Peace Justice Freedom

Chilean arpillera, anon.

This is a traditional arpillera depicting a protest by women against the Pinochet dictatorship. Some of the women are boldly defiant as they clash cymbals in front of a police car. Others carry leaflets spreading word of a campaign to find their missing loved ones who have disappeared without trace through the actions of the armed forces. It was made in the late 1970s.



The material used makes this piece particularly poignant as the dark grey background is from the trousers of a disappeared man and the road from the checked fabric shirt of another.

Working on arpilleras could be therapeutic. As the arpillerista Violeta Morales has said: 'I put all my energy into the arpillera workshop. It was sometimes the only thing that kept me balanced emotionally'.

Courtesy Alba Sanfeliú, Spain

0.41 x 0.50 m

## Dónde están los desaparecidos? / Where are the 'disappeared'?

Chilean arpillera, anon.

In this traditional arpillera, a group of women in colourful dresses are protesting in front of the Courts of Justice. They hold a banner reading: 'Where are the detained disappeared?' On the right-hand are silhouettes of two armed police, identified by their green clothes and their car. They are faceless to show that the protest is against the dictatorship and not the individual officers. Typically, the sun is in the sky, but the two large clouds are unusual.



The arpillera was made in the late 1980s in one of the workshops of the Vicaria de la Solidaridad.

The Chilean Truth Commission of the post-Pinochet regime was established to find out what happened to the disappeared and also to determine where their remains had been disposed. A total of 3,197 persons were officially recognized as disappeared or executed.

Courtesy Arpillera collection Kinderhilfe Chile/ Bonn.

0.37 x 0.48 m

## Retorno de los exiliados / Return of the exiles

Chilean arpillera, anon.

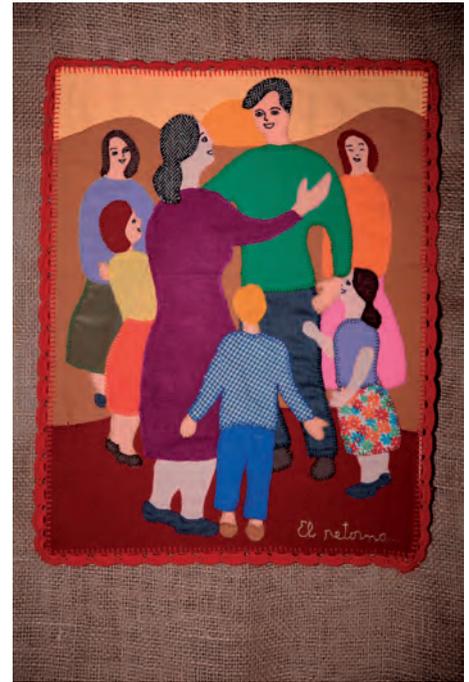
This arpillera shows a happy reunion of family members who were forced into exile during the Pinochet dictatorship. It was made in 1992 shortly after the regime ended.

Exile happened in different ways. When the military coup toppled Salvador Allende in 1973, many government workers and supporters took refuge in embassies and some managed to leave the country. Others, after imprisonment and often torture, were deported and went to countries that accepted them. Another group had to take 'economic exile' as they had been dismissed from their jobs and had no income. Some were even deprived of their Chilean nationality.

To deal with the new problems created by the mass return, the Oficina Nacional del Retorno (National Office for the Returnees) was created in 1990. It operated until 1994 and considered 52,557 cases. It was revealed that most of the exiles had been taken in by Sweden, Argentina, Canada, France and Germany.

Courtesy Arpillera collection Kinderhilfe Chile/Bonn.

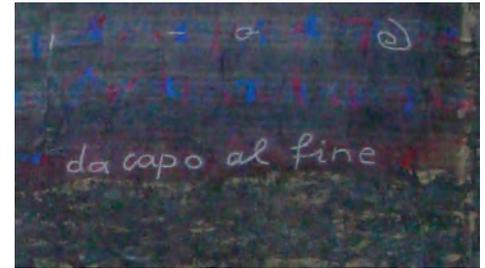
0.47 x 0.38 m



# Da capo al fine

Mixed media installation by Mara Loytved-Hardegg, Germany

This wall hanging was made in instalments in 1991, 2003 and 2009. The sheet comes from an Italian family of agricultural labourers. Mara found it by chance in the empty house she rented in Tuscany in the late 1980s. She found the helmet of a German soldier from the Second World War behind the house. It was fastened to a wooden stick and probably had been used to empty the latrine.



Detail



Detail

As the first invasion into Iraq by the USA took place in 1991, Mara started to embroider the words 'da capo al fine' on the sheet. The phrase means 'back to the beginning and finish at the word FINE'. For Mara, it expresses the repetition of life and death, of suppression and freedom, of war and peace.

In 2003 she embroidered traces of a lying figure, perhaps dead, onto the sheet. She also covered the helmet with mud from a hot spring not far from her house.

In 2009 she added the lines of a poem by Erich Fried:

"...my father was the war, peace is my beloved son, and he already resembles my father."

Courtesy of the artist

1.50 x 2.10 m



## **Gegossenes Blei / Cast lead**

Quilted felt wall hanging by Heidi Drahota, Germany

The name Operation Cast Lead is taken from a poem 'For Hanukkah' by the national poet of Israel, Haim Nachman Bialik. It is ironic and rather macabre that the name of a military operation which killed so many children should be taken from a poem about a children's toy: a spinning top made from cast lead traditionally played with on the joyous holiday of Hanukkah. It was given to this wall hanging to express horror about the war in Gaza.

There are 760 threads felted and sewed onto the backing material, the streaks of lead falling from above. Each one represents the lost life of a child or woman in Gaza.

Cast Lead was first shown at the international exhibition 'Threads of destiny: testimonies of violence, hope and survival' in Furth, Germany, in 2009. It was chosen as the cover for their catalogue.

Courtesy of the artist

**1.55 x 1.10 m**



## Violar es un crimen / Rape is a crime

Peruvian arpillera by M.H. from Mujeres Creativas workshop

It is remarkable that, in the midst of the destructive civil war in Peru from 1980 to 2000, a group of women living in Lima dared to publicise the plight of village women who had been raped and forced to resettle in the slums of the capital. This arpillera depicts the protest taken on their behalf.

Maria, who created this piece, said: 'In October 1985 many people were killed in Ayacucho and women were raped, but nobody protested. Two groups of us decided to demonstrate in front of Comando Conjunto (Joint Military Command) in Lima since the people actually living in Ayacucho felt too vulnerable to do so. We displayed a banner that read "Rape is a crime" and we placed flowers shaped as a cross to make it known that so many had died. Five of us decided to make an arpillera of our action to show we do not condone such brutality'.

Courtesy of the curator

0.42 x 0.47 m



## Sala de torturas / Torture chamber

Chilean arpillera by Violeta Morales

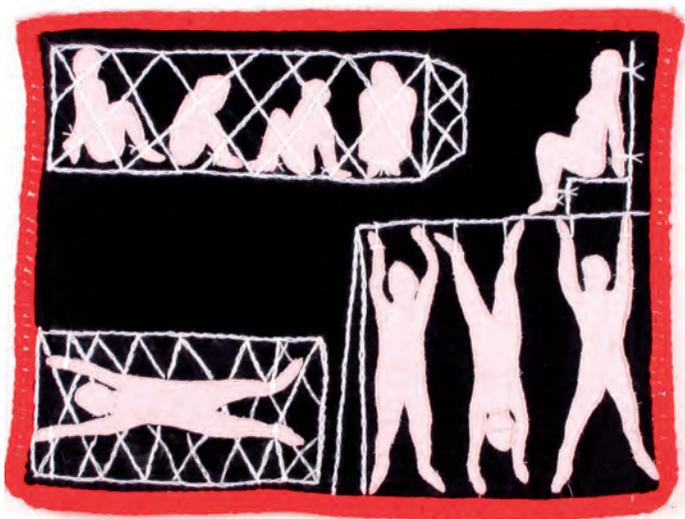
This is one of the most visually startling pieces in the exhibition with its simple black background and stark white figures. It graphically shows people being tortured in various ways, portraying them in a dehumanised way with featureless faces, just as torture dehumanises individuals.

According to an official report after the fall of the Pinochet government, thousands of people were subjected to some form of torture during his regime. Some 35,868 people approached the investigating commission of which 27,255 were officially registered as torture victims.

In this arpillera, Violeta Morales is outspoken about Chile's infamous history of torture, which was long unknown in the wider world.

Courtesy Marjorie Agosín, Chile/USA

0.47 x 0.52 m



## Reflections on violence

This English arpillera made by Linda Adams in 2009 is a good example of her work in which she expresses her concerns and feelings about current issues in various parts of the world. It depicts the Free Tibet protest in London when the Olympic torch was carried through the city on the way to Beijing. The protestors with their placards against Chinese oppression in Tibet are kept behind a barrier and can only watch the Chinese security personnel and British police.

Linda was amazed at the repression of protesters in London when they were trying to raise awareness of repression elsewhere. She commented: 'Where is our free expression?'

On attending the exhibition of arpilleras in Cambridge in October 2008 as part of the Festival of Ideas, Linda was inspired to begin making arpilleras. She has said: 'I knew how to sew with my hands but seeing the Cambridge exhibition and listening to the presentation taught me to sew with my heart'.

Courtesy of the artist

**0.33 x 0.46 m**



Detail

## El recuerdo de esa historia / The memory of this story

Arpillera made by Angela Matamoros Vásquez and Angela Vásquez González  
Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Angela Matamoros Vásquez and her daughter show here how our memories and experiences can be passed down from generation to generation. The arpillera represents the stories told by Angela's parents. In this way, 72-year-old Angela can share with her daughter the things that happened in her hometown during the Spanish Civil War.

She said: 'The truck travelling along the road is carrying men on their way to be executed. The

crosses show the graves where they were buried. When the men were rounded up and put on trucks, the women would come against the odds to say goodbye to sons and husbands. They would be in tears because they knew they would never see them again'.

With this arpillera, the makers were able to contribute to the retrieval of these untold stories from a female perspective, allowing future generations to better understand what happened during this violent period of Spanish history.

Courtesy Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc

0.49 x 0.55 m



# Mis memorias de la Guerra / My memories of the war

Arpillera made by Rosalía Rodríguez

Women Sewing History Workshop, Badalona, Spain, 2009

Rosalía Rodríguez Hernández said that making this arpillera was a kind of therapy for her. It represents the arrest of her mother during the Spanish Civil War when women were imprisoned and tortured for no other reason than being an anarchist's wife. Rosalía had been beaten by the police who came to drag her mother away and had to watch as they cut off her hair and forced her to drink castor oil.

Her saddest memories arose from knowing that her mother had suffered torture and, before her arrest, had had an exhausting struggle to maintain and care for her family.

She said that stitching the arpillera by hand was like writing the words of her story and sharing her sorrow with the rest of the group in the Women Sewing History Workshop.

Courtesy Fundació Ateneu Sant Roc

0.45 x 0.51.5 m





# Soldiers back from the wars

Arpilleras by Linda Adams, Ely, England

In order to make this compelling set of three arpilleras, Linda interviewed local men who had survived war. She then expressed her understanding of the personal cost of war to them, both during the fighting and on their return home, through the medium of her craft.

One arpillera shows a scene after an attack next to the barracks. Another depicts fears, nightmares and suicidal behaviour. The third describes the life of a soldier living rough in the streets once back from war.



Linda has said about her pieces:

'Although in these pieces I did focus on the story of the ex-servicemen who have come back and who are living rough in my area', said Linda, 'they are meant to tell the story of the hopelessness faced by those coming home from any war. I have read many accounts of what it was like in other countries as well as the stories told to me and they always follow the same pattern'.

Courtesy of the artist

0.32 X 0.44 m, 0.32 X 0.44 m, 0.42 X 0.30 m



## **Al Servicio de la Vida / Servicing life**

Chilean arpillera, anon.

This arpillera depicts the kind of activities and areas of support that Catholic church undertook to assist a substantial part of the population persecuted and abandoned by the Pinochet dictatorship. It shows the headquarters of the church where problems such as legal defence, exile, political imprisonment, the detained disappeared, and the presentation of habeas corpus to the courts are being dealt with on behalf of local people.

It was made in one of the workshops of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, which was founded by the Chilean Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez. He had obtained permission to create the Vicaría from Pope Paul VI. The organisation also ran workshops, first-aid centres and training in human rights and the production of bulletins, among other things. It was active from 1976 to 1992, continuing its work for two years after Pinochet was deposed in 1990.

Courtesy Arpillera collection Kinderhilfe Chile/Bonn.



## Human Cost Of War – Workshops and Discussions

A series of workshops and roundtable discussions will be delivered on the theme of 'The Human Cost of War' and textiles to coincide with the exhibition.

These workshops will take place at the Tower Museum.

There will also be guided tours of the exhibition by guest curator Roberta Bacic every Friday at 11.30 am from 12 November until 17 December

**Afghanistan Installation:** Launch and Schools' Workshop

**Artist-in-residence:** Heidi Drahota

**Launch date:** Monday, 8 November at 12 noon in the Verbal Arts Centre

**Further details:** Contact Bernie Kilroy on 028 7126 6946

**Booking is required for all events.**

*For further details please contact:*

Derry City Council Heritage & Museum Service

T: 028 7137 7331, E: [margaret.edwards@derrycity.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.edwards@derrycity.gov.uk) W: [www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums](http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums)



Movement for the  
Abolition of War

