

This bulletin was written by AP Peace Fellow Karin Orr, who is volunteering with the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team (EPAF), an AP partner since 2007.

Relatives of Peru's Disappeared Use Knitting to Demand Justice, Meet Police Resistance

August 2, 2010, Lima, Peru: I recently observed as 30 women from The National Association of Kidnapped, Detained and Disappeared Family Members of Peru ([ANFASEP](#)) gathered outside the Justice Ministry to continue knitting their "Chalina de la Esperanza" or "The Scarf of Hope."

The scarf is made up of knitted panels that carry the embroidered names of disappeared family members and the date they were last seen, and it is now an astonishing 200 meters long. Dressed in their traditional garb, the women sat peacefully along the fence of the Palacio de Justicia, knitting. The Police were not amused (left), and ordered them to leave. The women calmly gathered their needles and boxes of yarn, crossed the street, and continued to knit.



The Scarf of Hope has come a long way since it started in September last year. The women of ANFASEP have used it at public demonstrations, as on this occasion when they demanded that the Justice Ministry locate their missing relatives and pay reparations of approximately \$35,000 per family.

They have also used knitting to engage ordinary Peruvians, many of whom would rather forget their country's Dirty War (1980-2000). As the scarf winds its way through Peru, the knitters invite onlookers to participate in a knitting session ("Tejidotón"). Many of those who respond were also victims of Peru's political violence and they use the opportunity to heal, tell stories, or just express solidarity with the movement.

The last "Tejidotón" took place at the La Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos in Lima on July 17, and attracted over forty knitters and a hundred observers.

Gisela Ortiz, Director of Operations at [The Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team \(EPAF\)](#), who lost her brother to the disappearances in 1992, says: "So far, we have 200

meters. We hope by November to have 800 meters and expect it to be a huge scarf that can at least wrap the Palacio de Justicia, or any other public building. In that sense, we are embracing hope, so that justice may reach each of the family members of the disappeared."

EPAF is a member of the National Coordinator of Human Rights in Peru and has also provided forensic expertise to ANFASEP.

The Scarf of Hope was initiated by a Peruvian journalist, Paola Ugaz, and photographers Marina García Burgos and Morgana Vargas Llosa, to raise awareness about Peru's some 15,000 disappeared. Once the scarf is completed, they hope to display it in the municipality of Lima's San Isidro district.



For the knitters, who do not have a place to grieve, each knitted image or name serves the same purpose as a memorial site. For them, the length of the scarf symbolizes the massive number of cases that still await proper investigations and the number of families waiting for reparations. Peru has 4,644 registered burial sites, yet fewer than 2% of the bodies have been identified. EPAF's own program of exhumations has stalled because of obstruction from the government.

The women of ANFASEP are from Peru's Ayacucho region, where 40% of the disappearances occurred, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Most of the victims were Quechua-speaking persons, who are among the poorest communities in Peru. When they lost their husbands, children, and parents many of these women also lost their breadwinners.

The fact that the police requested their removal from the Justice Ministry is yet another reflection of their marginalization, and the indifference of the government to their needs. Yet, they continue to respond, as they know best - with resilience and non-violent protest.

- Learn more about [ANFASEP](#)
- Visit the [EPAF](#) website.
- Read [Karin's blogs](#).