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Peru's Pitchfork Politics

The Rise of Vigilantism and the Right Wing

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On September 15, the people of Andas, a small community in the mountains of central Peru, caught two men suspected of fatally shooting a local 57-year-old father of six. Since the nearest police station was two hours away, the mob took justice into their own hands [1]: they stripped the alleged criminals naked, bound their hands and feet, drenched them in gasoline, and burned them alive. As Andas' mayor later told the newspaper *La República*, "*La muerte de ellos fue la solución*"—Their death was the solution.

This was not an isolated incident. A new wave of vigilantism has been sweeping Peru since the late summer, starting in the cities and then spreading outward. There is even a Twitter movement, #ChapaTuChoro [2], a slang term that translates to "Catch Your Thief [3]," that has sprung up and encourages citizens to go one step beyond civilian arrests—to take justice into their own hands and punish suspected criminals through public humiliation and even mob lynchings. Documentation of the gruesome behavior is often uploaded to YouTube [4].

But Peruvian citizens feel that their brand of street justice is justified. "It's not that we are barbarians," Someya Rojas Leivas, a supporter of the movement, told me. "It's that we are tired of being at the mercy of criminals, and the bloody authorities do nothing." Around the time of the Andas incident, national support for the movement hovered at around 53 percent; by early October, it had soared to 72 percent. "Run, run, run," singer Rony warns [5]

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[2] <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23chapatuchoro&src=tyah>

[3] <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-34224196>

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