



Breaking the Silence (BTS)
Rompiendo el Silencio (RES)

#NosDuelen56 Art Exhibit

Beautiful portraits contributed by artists globally to honour the girls killed in the 2017 Hogar Seguro fire in Guatemala

This art project was created as an exercise of collective memory and to highlight the dignity of each of the forty-one girls and young women killed in a fire at the state-run centre for children and youth *Hogar Seguro Virgen de la Asunción* in Guatemala on March 8, 2017. #NosDuelen56 roughly translates to “We mourn the 56,” which includes the 15 girls and young women who survived the fire and were severely injured. This tragedy, which took place on International Women's Day, has become a key case for gender justice in the country and region.

While the *Hogar Seguro* was supposed to be a safe place for Guatemala's children, this was far from the case. On that day, the girls and young women were enclosed by police in a small room under lock and key after attempting to escape the home. Despite their cries for help, the police would not let them out after a fire broke out inside the room. As a result, forty-one girls and young women died and the lives of fifteen others were severely impacted.

Estefani Sotoj is a survivor of the fire who spent 30 days in a coma and lost 9 of her fingers. She lives with severe burns throughout her body. Estefani shares, “We [the survivors] aren't well. We have changed. No one cares about us. Instead of helping us they made us worse. The state failed, and it is the state's fault.”

As Estefani highlights, the responsibility for this tragedy lies with the Guatemalan government. This includes the failure of state institutions to act on prior reports of abuse and poor conditions at the *Hogar Seguro*, as well as the decision by high-level officials and President Jimmy Morales to bring in police to deal with a very sensitive situation, which they were not equipped to deal with.

This project is a shout for justice through art, journalism, media activism and feminisms. It was launched online on May 15, 2017 by the alternative media organizations *Prensa Comunitaria* in Guatemala and *Desinformémonos* in Mexico, together with 60 digital media agencies, as well as 40 organizations and collectives globally that united in one voice.

Art allows us to put faces and colours to mourning for the 41 girls who were killed in what amounts to a massacre. Our intention through this project is for the world to remember them. This project is the result of contributions by 58 artists in Mexico, Argentina, France, Italy, Spain and Guatemala.

This art exhibit is hosted in Canada by the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network in lead up to the second anniversary of the tragedy. For more information, visit us at www.breakingthesilenceblog.com