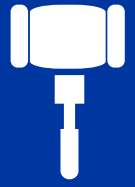


SYMBOLIC COURT

México 2016

Obstetric Violence and Maternal Death



Index

Introduction	4
Testimonies	6
Recommendations	116

Introduction

On May 9, 2016, before an audience of more than 300 people, 27 women and families who had suffered obstetric violence and maternal deaths from different regions of the country, met in Mexico City to present their testimonies in their own voice. Each person presented a testimony to denounce human rights violations, against them or a family member, which should never have occurred. All participants were accompanied by at least one of the 27 host organizations¹

The Symbolic court on maternal death and obstetric violence was a civil exercise that reproached the structural flaws, habitual conduct and consistent omissions in the contexts of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care that cause human rights violations against hundreds of women and their families in Mexico every year. Some of the consequences of these violations include preventable maternal deaths,² harm to women's physical and emotional health and neonatal and fetal deaths. This translates to families who are forced to cope with the absence of the women whose human rights the Mexican State failed to guarantee and, in many other cases, to the tireless search for a justice that is seldom found.


The voices of women and families from Chiapas, Durango, the State of Mexico, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Yucatan and Zacatecas were heard: 17 cases of obstetric violence, ten of maternal mortality, five neonatal and ten fetal deaths; 24 young children now live without their mothers.

The Court's jury was comprised of six international experts with extensive experience in reproductive health and rights: Alda Facio, Alicia Yamín, Catalina Martínez, Gladys Acosta, Julissa Mantilla and Sandra Oyarzo, who intervened to frame these situations, starting with the obligations that the Mexican State failed to fulfill for these women in terms of reproductive rights.

The goal of this publication is to establish a written testimony of what happened, to understand that it is not a question of "cases" but of individuals and families who suffered damages, in some cases, irreparable. Thus, we aim, on the one hand, that the voices of these women and their families be heard on a wider scale and that the debt that the

1. These organizations can be consulted on the second to last page of this publication.

2. According to information prepared by the Observatory of Maternal Mortality based on the Ministry of Health's Epidemiological Bulletins, in 2015 there were 712 maternal deaths registered in Mexico and as of October 3, 2016 there were 588 registered for this year. Available at <http://www.omm.org.mx/index.php/indicadores-nacionales/boletines-de-mortalidad-materna/2015> [accessed: October 13, 2016].



Mexican State has to them and to all women in the country is not forgotten; and on the other hand, that the competent authorities implement the recommendations included here, so that stories such as these are not repeated.

We want to thank all the women and families who told their story during the court for their trust. We admire their bravery and we reiterate our commitment to them. We would also like to acknowledge the presence of the six specialists who made up the jury as they put their daily activities on hold in order to accompany us in this event of reproach.

The Symbolic court on maternal mortality and obstetric violence was not an isolated exercise. It is part of a continuous effort made by organized civil society to end the violations of human rights that women face on a daily basis in the health sector. The pain behind each story is palpable and becomes more real when we see the faces of the narrators. The most frustrating thing is that with the passing of the years things stay the same. The number of stories grows, the statistics increase and we do not find a way to give hope to the women and their families; we cannot guarantee that things are going to change for them. It is necessary for the State to hear these stories and make the changes recommended so that we can move slowly towards justice.

We cannot permit women, in a country that exalts maternity, to continue to suffer this mistreatment - which at times even culminates in death - as is currently the case. Mexico must not allow that more families have to weep for their daughters, mothers, wives, sisters –not only because they want to hug them but cannot because they are gone— but because they do not understand what happened during labor that impeded them from getting out alive. On what is a day that should be remembered with joy, and with women being especially vulnerable, the delivery wards are a grave for many of them.

Bernarda, Anahí's sister with her father and brothers.



ANAHI • MATERNAL DEATH, OAXACA.

In March 2013, Anahí arrived at the hospital in Juxtlahuaca, as she did every month, to have her prenatal check-up. However, something was not right. After her appointment, she was told that she would have to be hospitalized and she underwent a cesarean the next day. She was operated on by a gynecologist, an anesthetist and various residents. Hours later, her family was informed that she was unwell and would have to be transferred to another hospital. Not only was information kept from them, but they also faced threats for filing a law suit and taking the case to the media.

On March 14, 2013, Anahí went to the hospital in Juxtlahuaca for a simple prenatal check-up. But something was not right and the following day she had a cesarean. The surgery didn't go well as a result of medical negligence and she died on March 20.

The head physician of the gynecology department was not among those ministering to my sister. She was operated on by a gynecologist, an anesthetist and various residents. More than eight hours went by before we were informed that she was in a serious condition and that she would have to be transferred to the city of Oaxaca by air ambulance. As I live nearer to Oaxaca I arrived at the hospital before her. I waited

When she arrived at the hospital in Oaxaca I wanted to follow the stretcher and they told me “you can't go in there”. They closed the transparent glass door and I heard a person say, “Why did they send her to us? She's dead!”

for a while and when she arrived I wanted to follow the stretcher. The only thing they said to me was “you can't go in there” and they closed the transparent glass door. Then I heard a person say, “Why did they send her to us? She's dead!” I saw them put the paddles on her chest. She reacted only once out of the many attempts. They gave her medicines and took her to another place. I followed them but they were going very fast and I lost sight of them. So then I started to ask questions.

Eventually they told me that she was in intensive care. After asking many times, they finally told us that she had arrived at the hospital brain dead. We sought external neurologists, but all of them seemed to be



During the funeral there were very emotional speeches about the way in which she died. These speeches were disseminated and then we started to receive anonymous phone calls telling us to calm down. They didn't like it that we complained about the inadequate medical care in the hospital.

aware of the case. They always answered, "Ah, Anahi's case. I can't, I am going to be busy." How is it that people who were not from the hospital knew about it? In the end we found a neurologist who agreed to go, although he asked us to pay for the appointment in advance.

When my sister died, she had no medical file and so they did not hand her over to us immediately. Everything is supposed to be in order for a transfer. How did the file get lost? It took over 24 hours from

them to give it to us. Apart from that, they wanted my father to sign that it was a natural death.

We filed a legal complaint with the public prosecutor's office which, at that moment, told us to return to the hospital because they had to give us the body and medical record. We went back to the hospital but there wasn't anybody in the office. The public prosecutor's agent told us he would return with us the following day, but he never arrived.

They transferred her to Oaxaca by helicopter. She was in the hospital for five days but almost lifeless, unconscious.



On March 21, we were given the body but not the medical record. They sent her to the Red Cross, there they did the autopsy and that night they transferred her to our community. On March 23, we could bury her. During the funeral there were very emotional speeches about the way in which she died, there were many doctors from the hospital and from different communities there. These speeches were disseminated and then we started to receive anonymous phone calls telling us to calm down. They didn't like it that we complained about the

inadequate medical care in the hospital. The hospital at Juxtlahuaca is in the Mixteca, one of the poorest regions in the state. Women continue to die there, the same story keeps being repeated, and the authorities do not take action.

Testimony of Bernarda, Anahí's sister.



Sergio, Cecilia's husband and Martina, her aunt.



CECILIA • MATERNAL DEATH, DURANGO.

In the 37th week of her third pregnancy Cecilia had contractions and bleeding. After a pelvic exam at the hospital, she was told to return home because it was not yet time. Her condition remained the same over the next two days. She returned to the hospital but was given the same response because “the bleeding wasn’t heavy”. On the third occasion she went unaccompanied and was hospitalized because she fainted while waiting in line to be treated. When her husband and mother arrived, they were told that she had died, that the cause was unknown and that she had left a newborn baby.

Cecilia had two sons. The second one was born eight years earlier and she was now pregnant with her third child. The pregnancy appeared to be normal. In her 37th week Cecilia went to the clinic with contractions and bleeding. The doctors performed a pelvic exam, but did not do an ultrasound or any other tests, and sent her home because “it was not yet time”.

Two days later she returned to the Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS) because the contractions and bleeding had not abated. Once again, the doctors performed a pelvic exam but no other test. They sent her home again with instructions to return when the bleeding intensified.

In less than a month she had to have four operations. When she was delivered to us she was bleeding from the mouth, nose and from her wound. We found out that the surgeon had perforated her intestine and colon.

Cecilia went to the clinic for the third time. She wasn’t at all well but she walked and took a bus, in the midst of contractions. There was a line to enter the clinic, and the people at the front, on seeing how ill she was, gave her their place. She fainted and that was when she was finally given medical care.

She was hospitalized when the shift changed at 7:21 pm. Thirty minutes later hospital personnel came out to ask for the family members of the lady who was dressed in such and such a way. Sergio, Cecilia’s

husband and Eulalia, Cecilia’s mother, approached them and were told that she had died. They have not been able to find out exactly what was the real cause of death.



We filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission. It took two years for them to make their recommendation and we are still waiting for the authorities to fulfill it. We continue to seek justice, above all for the little girl, who ultimately died.

We reported it to the local media, which is when the delegate wanted to speak to us. Seated face to face with him, I told him that it had been medical negligence. Cecilia would have been saved if they had given her medical care the first time she was there, but all they did was give her a pelvic exam. A doctor there said that he was trying to explain it to us the best he could, but since we didn't understand, well then "screw off".

The gynecologist responded that not all pregnancies are the same. That doesn't

justify anything. She was in her 37th week. Why wasn't she under observation? If it was very difficult to save the baby's life, they should have saved Cecilia's. In the media it was reported that she died of a cardiopulmonary stroke. I asked the gynecologist what this information was based on, he replied that it was based on his 20 years experience as a doctor.

Cecilia is survived by her daughter, Génesis Guadalupe, who was the reason that we went to the media. In less than a month she had to have four operations,

A doctor there said that he was trying to explain it to us the best he could, but since we didn't understand, well then "screw off".



and they will not explain to us why. When she was delivered to us she was bleeding from the mouth, nose and from her wound. They did also not give us a precise diagnosis for the little girl. We subsequently found out that the surgeon had perforated her intestine and colon, and we decided to transfer her to the General Hospital. The most serious thing was when I spoke to someone at the National Human Rights Commission; they agreed with the IMSS.

We filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission. It took two years

for them to make their recommendation and we are still waiting for the authorities to fulfill it. We continue to seek justice, above all for the little girl, who ultimately died.

It is inexcusable that women continue to die in childbirth in the 21st century; today there is a lot of technology.

Testimony of Martina, Cecilia's aunt.



Margarita, María Ligia's mother and her brother.



MARÍA LIGIA • MATERNAL DEATH, YUCATAN.

María Ligia was supposed to give birth to her sixth child in January 2014, but her pains started before that. She went to the Peto Community Hospital with her mother where she was assured that everything was fine. However, the next day they were told to get hold of an ambulance to transfer her to Merida because she had to have an urgent cesarean. At the O’Horan Hospital nobody attended to her medical necessity and Maria Ligía died that same night. Since then, the five children that survived her are in the care of their father Eutiquio and their grandmother.

Two years have passed since my daughter died. Many people have told me to forget about it, but I don’t want to because she was my only daughter. Some time ago I dreamed about my daughter, that she came to visit me at home. I am not going to forget about her.

We live in Chacsinkín which is next to Peto. On Saturday night we took her to the hospital in Peto because her pains had started. There, neither the doctors nor nurses told me anything. I wanted to see my daughter, but the nurses said that I couldn’t. I managed to go in and saw them giving her a pill, I thought I should ask what they were giving her, but I didn’t. The next day I could go in again, it was 10 o’clock in the

morning. I felt happy because she looked fine, and I returned home.

On Monday the doctors told me that they had to send her to Merida immediately because the pregnancy was going badly. We had to call Chacsinkín to see if there was an ambulance. We found one and the driver

went to Peto for my daughter, but before leaving for Merida we returned to Chacsinkín because the driver had to pick up his wife and two other people. When we arrived in Merida, Maria Ligía’s condi-

tion was worse. On the way there she was very ill and there was nobody to treat her.

When we arrived in Merida they put her in a wheelchair. That was the last time I saw her.

When we arrived in Merida they put her in a wheelchair. That was the last time I saw her. There was no doctor or nurse who spoke Maya.



Although three years have gone by, I do not forget my daughter. I always remember her when I see my five grandchildren. Sometimes I wonder why I didn't die instead of her.

There was no doctor or nurse who spoke Maya and I speak very little Spanish.

I stayed there overnight and in the morning I insisted that they let me see her. When they finally let me through, the doctors told me that my daughter was dead. I asked them why she had died, what had happened, if it was because there was no nurse to attend to her during the night. They didn't tell me anything, only that when morning came my daughter was already dead, that they didn't know what time she died.

A lady who was there and who spoke Maya came with me to speak to the doctors. There were two of them. One of them said that the babies were alive and the other one said that they were dead.

I don't understand why they don't tell me the truth. If they are alive I am there to care for them, to look after them. But they asked me how I was going to take care of the children. Ten days after my daughter died, they spoke to her husband Eutiquio and told him to come for the children at the hospital in Merida, that they were dead.

Ten days after my daughter died, they spoke to her husband Eutiquio and told him to come for the children at the hospital in Merida, that they were dead.



He worked in Cancún and it wasn't until he arrived and signed that they gave him my daughter's body, because without the husband's signature they cannot. I couldn't do anything, we had to wait.

Although three years have gone by, I do not forget my daughter. I always remember her when I see my five grandchildren. Sometimes I wonder why I didn't die instead of her.

I worry a lot because with my health as it is I don't know who is going to take care of

the smallest child. A lady in Cancun asked me for him and even offered me money, but I want to be with him. My grandson doesn't have a price.

Testimony of Margarita, María Ligia's mother.



Abisai, Haidé's husband.



HAIDÉ • MATERNAL DEATH, STATE OF MEXICO

Abisaí and Haidé did not know that she had pulmonary fibrosis. She was diagnosed in her fifth month of pregnancy. She had difficulty breathing and felt very tired; she was taken to the emergency room because her lips had turned purple. There they thought she was suffering from the flu and a whole day went by without her being given adequate treatment. Her state of health deteriorated rapidly. She was given an accurate diagnosis at the La Raza National Medical Center, but it was too late. Haidé died, allegedly with her baby still inside her, but this was not the case. Abisaí has still not found answers to all his questions.

Haidé was 26 years old and suffered from pulmonary fibrosis although nobody had ever told her.

She was five months pregnant and had respiratory problems and fatigue. Sometimes we could see the fatigue, but it began to get worse, and we had to take her to hospital – her lips were purple. They told us it was a lack of oxygen. We went to Gineco 3A, the IMSS obstetrics hospital. She was admitted on October 12, 2014, and for the next two days they did tests, took x-rays and observed the baby. Haidé's lungs were severely damaged.

They couldn't diagnose her. Initially it was supposedly the flu but then they started to

treat it as a lung problem. Her health continued to deteriorate and they transferred her to the hospital of immunology at La Raza. They said that they had already done the paperwork for the transfer, but when we arrived there were neither pulmonologists nor beds. We should have been sent to the specific pulmonology area but instead we were sent to the hospital for specialties. They then admitted her to intensive care.

They told me that the baby was in good health but they couldn't find out what was wrong with my wife. They didn't know how to stop it,

the days went by and she started to have heart attacks. During the last operation she went into respiratory arrest. I asked them about my daughter's health again and they

I filed a complaint with CONAMED, and all they did was say to me, "Sorry, we made a mistake". More than a year and a half later and with a complaint at the CNDH, I cannot close the case because they still have my daughter's body.



A doctor in pathology they told me that the baby was with my wife. I did all the documentation, always with the idea that the funeral was for my wife and daughter, but a month later they called me to tell me that they had taken my baby's body out and that they had it there; whether they should give it to me or dispose of it themselves.

said that the probability of survival for both of them was very low. I told them that if it was necessary to perform an abortion in order to give my wife a specific treatment, that they should do so.

Later they said that they had done everything medically possible, that they had run out of options, that they had brought her equipment for which they were charged an hourly fee, that it was very expensive. There was nothing else but to wait for another heart attack.

When they told me that she had died I asked about my baby, and they said that nothing could be done, that my baby had also died.

That day they made me sign a document authorizing an autopsy, in order to examine her lungs and find out the cause. The doctor didn't explain anything else. I did the paperwork for her body to be delivered to me. I asked a doctor where my baby was and she told me that the baby was with my wife. In pathology they told

They made me sign a document authorizing an autopsy, in order to examine her lungs and find out the cause. The doctor didn't explain anything else.



me the same. I did all the documentation, always with the idea that the funeral was for both my wife and daughter, but a month later they called me to give me the results from pathology and they told me that they had taken my baby's body out and that they had it there; they asked me whether they should give it to me or dispose of it themselves.

I filed a complaint with the National Commission of Medical Arbitration (CONAMED), and all they did was say to me, "Sorry, we

made a mistake." More than a year and a half later and with a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), I cannot close the case because they still have my daughter's body. I don't want any economic benefit. I just want to make sure that this doesn't happen to anyone else.

Testimony of Abisaí, her husband.



Two of Hortencia's children



HORTENCIA • MATERNAL DEATH, HIDALGO.

Hortencia was 37 years old and pregnant with her fourth child. She sought assistance at the emergency room of the Pachuca Obstetric Hospital because she had chest pain. Her husband Miguel accompanied her. She spent the night in a wheelchair with her feet bandaged, with no other medical care. She was transferred to the General Hospital, where a neurosurgeon told Miguel that there was nothing more that could be done for her. She died of eclampsia and her son was born with severe psychomotor impairment because of the delayed medical care. Hortencia's family put their lives on hold and four years later they have not yet managed to return to normality.

In 2012 my wife was pregnant with our fourth child. One day she began to feel ill – she had chest pains and I thought that she was going to have a heart attack. I took her to the Pachuca Obstetric Hospital. They told me that her blood pressure was very high but all they did was bandage her feet and leave her to sit in a wheelchair the whole night. Her condition never stabilized. She was eventually transferred to emergencies at the General Hospital, where they told me her condition was very serious and that she was probably going to die. A neurosurgeon said to me, “I am very sorry, we can't do anything more for your wife. Her vital signs are unresponsive. The only thing that is functioning is her heart, but

I went to Human Rights because my son was diagnosed with severe psychomotor impairment resulting from the delayed and poor medical care. Eight months passed before they told me that it was a case of medical negligence.

if I disconnect this machine she will die. The decision as to whether I disconnect or whether we wait for her heart to slow down is yours.” At that moment I couldn't think and I didn't know what to do. The only thing I said was that they should wait until her family could see her. She died of eclampsia. At the hospital they told me that it is my right to find out if the death of my wife was a consequence of medical failure.

I went to Human Rights because my son was diagnosed with severe psychomotor impairment resulting from the delayed and poor medical care. Eight months passed before they told me that it was a case of medical negligence, In the Commission of



I don't know if we expect anything from the authorities. The truth is that the trust has gone. But yes, we would like the death of my wife to mean something to other families, so that they won't have to go through what we did.

Medical Arbitration they admitted it was medical negligence, but the judge said that there was not enough evidence to convict the doctors. I could not understand it. I asked if he needed me to take him my wife's body in order to have more proof. He told me, "you can do what you want, complain to whomever you want. The case is now settled and there is no going back." The doctors told the judge that they had offered me 200,000 pesos

but that I didn't want it, but they never offered me anything. What a doctor did say to me was "withdraw the complaint. Understand that one day your children or your siblings or you are going to get sick and you have our support to receive you promptly." Seriously, this is the only way you are going to give us medical care?

That's when I realized that there is no justice. All I ask is that there are no more

My sisters work and take care of Emmanuel, my older children had to grow up fast and didn't enjoy their adolescence very much.



deaths, that there is more responsibility in the hospital, that there are doctors who are better trained. That they take responsibility for the crimes that they have committed.

What more can one do? They can never bring my wife back to me. I don't know if we expect anything from the authorities. The truth is that the trust has been lost. But yes, we would like the death of my wife to mean something to other families, to in

some way ensure that they won't have to go through what we did.

Now the house doesn't feel so sad, we continue to miss the people that are not here but now we look forward to being there. The family is close, we are trying very hard to move on, for my youngest son and for everyone.

Testimony of Miguel, her husband,
read by Alejandra, her daughter.



Alicia, Guadalupe's grandmother.



GUADALUPE • MATERNAL DEATH, DURANGO.

Lupita was 17 years old and pregnant with her second child. After giving birth she was discharged on the same day because of a shortage of beds for other patients, even though she had a fever and didn't feel well. Two days later she returned to the hospital because her fever had not subsided. She was told that it was only the flu and that she should return home. Her temperature however did not drop and her family once again took her to the hospital. She was treated by residents, who told her that it was her appendix that was the problem. Nobody informed the family of what was happening. In reality, Lupita died from a puerperal infection due to an absence of timely medical attention.

Lupita was 17 years old and this was her second pregnancy. She was discharged from the hospital on the day of her delivery because of a shortage of beds. She was very pale and gaunt. She said that she did not feel well, that she had no energy. Two days later, we took her back to the clinic because she had a high fever. In the emergency room, they told her that nothing was wrong, that she just had a simple fever, a simple case of the flu, that they had already prescribed her medicine, and that she should go home.

At home her fever did not subside and we took her to the hospital again, in a wheelchair. She was shaking and could not get out of the truck. We were told to wait, but nobody appeared. I went inside but there

I watched in desperation as they killed someone I love and I couldn't do anything. I was helpless. I did everything I could for the autopsy to be performed somewhere else, but this was not possible.

was nobody there either. It was the "emergency room" but they told me they were waiting for the doctor to arrive. I grabbed hold of Lupita, went inside and a doctor attended me. Lupita's condition was very serious, she didn't open her eyes any more, she just shook. That night they said that they were going to operate on her appendix. The next day she was in intensive care. She was pallid and when I spoke to her she did not answer me anymore. The last thing she said was that I was to take care of her children. She did not speak again, we could see how her condition was deteriorating.

I went to see the director of the hospital and I told him that Lupita was hospitalized



I went to see the director of the hospital and I told him that Lupita was hospitalized in a serious condition and that nobody was giving her medical attention. I asked him to tell me what to do or that he should at least give me permission to take her out of there because they were not looking after her, I could see that they were killing her. The director said to me, “No, here we don’t kill people, we are looking after her”.

in a serious condition and that nobody was giving her medical attention. I asked him to tell me what to do or that he should at least give me permission to take her out of there because they were not looking after her, I could see that they were killing her. The director said to me, “No, here we don’t kill people, we are looking after her.” But we could see no improvement, she was being cared for by mere trainees, and nobody

was telling us what was happening. He promised me that he would pay more attention to her.

The next day they operated on her again. They said that she had a lot of water in her stomach, and that her intestines were very inflamed. But her condition was too serious for surgery. When I saw her, she was ice-cold. At about 12 they confirmed that she had died.

One feels a lot of impotence on seeing that the doctors don't do their job. When there is no money on the table, they leave you to die.



One feels a lot of impotence witnessing the doctors who don't do their job. When there is no money on the table, they leave you to die. I watched in desperation as they killed someone I love and I couldn't do anything. I was helpless. I did everything I could for the autopsy to be performed somewhere else, but this was not possible. The medical report said that she had died of a heart condition caused by a supposed addiction to drugs. Lupita did not have a heart condi-

tion and she was not addicted to anything. She died of fever caused by a post-natal infection that they did not want to see; she died because of what they did to her in the hospital, because of all the medicine and operations. She never complained about her heart. This director knows as much about medicine as I do, they kill a patient right under his nose and he does nothing.

Testimony of Alicia, Guadalupe's grandmother.



Romeo, Susana's husband, and son.



SUSANA • MATERNAL DEATH, CHIAPAS

Susana died on October 6, 2013 because of medical negligence during her delivery at the Women’s Hospital of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas. It took two days for her to be given medical care because there were neither personnel nor equipment available. The staff would not allow her mother-in-law to be present in light of the fact that she did not speak Spanish, the treatment that Susana received was degrading and her gallbladder was extracted without authorization. Susana’s husband was never given accurate information about her state of health and, when handed her newborn baby, he was given no explanation as to how she should be cared for. Had they not taken her to a private doctor, the little girl would have died as well.

My wife Susana died on October 6, 2013 from medical negligence during childbirth in the Women’s Hospital of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas. She was not attended to for two days because there was no staff or equipment.

On her arrival they made my mother—who was with her—wait outside the hospital because she doesn’t know how to speak Spanish. When I got there she was outside crying and she said to me, “they treated her very badly, they took her clothes off and left her naked in front of the staff and threw the earrings and rings that she was wearing on the floor.”

Susana had a cesarean at 4:00 in the morning and at 7:00 the doctor told me that her

condition was delicate but stable. In the next four hours, the doctors and nurses refused to give me more information about her state of health and they would not let me see her.

Later we found out that, without any authorization, they had extracted my wife’s gallbladder during the cesarean. The doctor gave us a jar holding Susana’s gallbladder and told us to take it to be examined at Pathology at the Hospital de las Culturas, although he knew that it did not open that day. During visiting hours, I returned to the hospital and looked for my wife in the same room where I had seen her the day before. The doctor came up to me and said, “the little girl is fine but the mother died.”

When I got there she was outside crying and she said to me, “they treated her very badly, they took her clothes off and left her naked in front of the staff and threw the earrings and rings that she was wearing on the floor.”



The government issued a public apology for what had happened. This was necessary for our family and a signal that they accept that they were wrong. But two and a half years after the death of my wife there has still not been total compliance with the recommendation issued by the National Human Rights Commission and the agreement for the comprehensive reparation of damages.

They gave me my wife's body and we took her home for the wake. They also handed me my daughter without giving me any information about how to feed or care for a newborn. When we arrived home we realized that the little girl wasn't breathing properly, she wasn't well, she was purple, she had not eaten for a long time. We had her hospitalized in a private hospital in San Cristóbal de las Casas where she was in an incubator

for two days. If we hadn't taken her to the hospital, she wouldn't be alive.

The government of Chiapas issued a public apology for what had happened. This was necessary for our family and a signal that they accept that they were wrong. But two and a half years after the death of my wife there has still not been total compliance with the recommendation issued by the National Human

Communities like Cruztón have health centers but not doctors or medicines. We have asked for a clinic, but they pay no attention.



Rights Commission and the agreement for the comprehensive reparation of damages.

It is important for the government to apply measures of non-repetition to avoid more cases like ours. One day my daughter will grow up and it may be necessary for her to go the hospital and run the same risk as her mother. It is very important to us that this does not happen.

Communities like Cruztón have health centers but not doctors or medicines. We have asked for a clinic, but they pay no attention. After Susana's death the government invested 18 million pesos in the Women's Hospital but women don't want to go there because they say that the care has not improved and they are afraid.

Testimony of Romeo, Susana's husband. .



Carolina.



CAROLINA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL BIRTHL, GUANAJUATO.

Carolina was pregnant with twins when she abruptly received the news that her daughters, still in her womb, were no longer alive. The person who had performed the ultrasound where the situation was observed used her, without her consent, to give a class. She had been told that her pregnancy was high-risk due to the high probability of her developing gestational diabetes. Nevertheless, she never received specialized care, she was always attended to by medical residents. Carolina decided that it wasn't worth filing a complaint because it "would not bring back my babies". In spite of her situation, all they did was give her antidepressants.

I found out that I was pregnant in July 2009. I applied to the *Seguro Popular* (universal governmental health service) because my partner didn't have work and they attended to me in the León Regional Hospital. I already had a one-year old son. His delivery was in the IMSS: they took a long time to care for me and my baby swallowed meconium, he was dying. He was born purple. For that reason I was very scared during my second pregnancy and I didn't want to go to the IMSS.

In December they did an ultrasound, I was in my fifth month, and they told me I was carrying twins. I was both very happy and very scared. They told me it was a high-risk pregnancy because I had a history of gestational diabetes, and they told me that my

The doctor told her students that the bodies of my daughters were full of amniotic fluid. I was crying and she was giving a class.

second pregnancy would be the same. They gave me medicine, but it made me feel really ill and I stopped taking it. They did some tests and everything seemed to be fine.

In January I was 29 weeks pregnant and I couldn't move around much, I felt very tired. My feet were swollen. They gave me an injection to mature the babies' lungs in case of an early delivery. In the last week of January I had to go to the private doctor on Tuesday, to the laboratory for preoperative tests on Wednesday

and for an ultrasound on Thursday. When I arrived at the hospital for the ultrasound, a doctor was there with trainees. She told me to sit down and said, "Ma'am, your babies are no longer alive." "What do you mean they're not alive? If I was here yesterday



I was taken along with other women who were going to give birth. They injected me with a medicine to expel the babies but it didn't work and they prepared me for a cesarean. They put me under completely and when I came to I was surrounded by mothers with babies.

and I was examined and I was sent to the laboratory." But on that Wednesday I had been examined by pure residents and the doctor hadn't been there to examine me.

The doctor showed her students who observed how the bodies of my daughters were full of amniotic fluid. I was crying and she continued to casually give a class. I said to the doctor, "Right, I'm going then." But she told me I had to wait for them to give me a document. She made me wait

while two other people were attended to, after which I was taken along with other women who were going to give birth. They injected me with a medicine to expel the babies but it didn't work and they prepared me for a cesarean.

They put me under completely and when I came to I was surrounded by mothers with babies. Why do they put you there? They ask you where your baby is or they say, "She's the one whose babies died."

When I arrived at the hospital for the ultrasound, a doctor was there with trainees. She told me to sit down and said, “Ma’am, your babies are no longer alive.”



They even asked me what contraceptive method I was going to use.

They knew that my pregnancy was high-risk. They had told me. Nevertheless, I never saw an experienced doctor. I was only seen by residents. The doctor was never there.

My husband asked me if I wanted to file a complaint but there was no point, it wasn't going to bring me back my daughters. After-

wards I took sertraline for a little more than six months. But what really helped a lot was being with my older son. He would speak to me when I felt lost and his voice would make me come back. We could not afford to pay for therapy.



Testimony read by Georgina Montalvo, GIRE.



GABRIELA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, GUANAJUATO.

Of her own volition and that of her partner, Gaby became a mother for the first time at the age of 15, then again when she was 19 and for the last time, at the age of 21. After the third birth, she was pressured to undergo a tubal ligation. On each occasion she suffered abusive treatment from the medical or nursing staff. For example, in the midst of the pain of her third delivery, the nurses made fun of her when she told them that she wouldn't be having her tubes tied because her husband was going to have a vasectomy. Now, 33 years old, she has gynecological problems that, according to her doctor, could be solved through the extraction of her uterus but she is still very young to undergo that procedure.

When I was about six months pregnant, I started to swell up. I was told I had high blood pressure, that I was suffering from pre-eclampsia, but at the IMSS they sent me to the gynecology department, they took my blood pressure and told me that I was fine. The same thing happened three times.

One Sunday I had to go to the hospital because I had a pink discharge. They sent me home because I wasn't in pain. The next Thursday I returned and the nurses said, "Your blood pressure is very high. You were never told?"

Then a doctor said that I had 2 cm dilation. They put me on a drip and I started to have severe pains. Then they started insisting on tying my tubes so that I could not have any

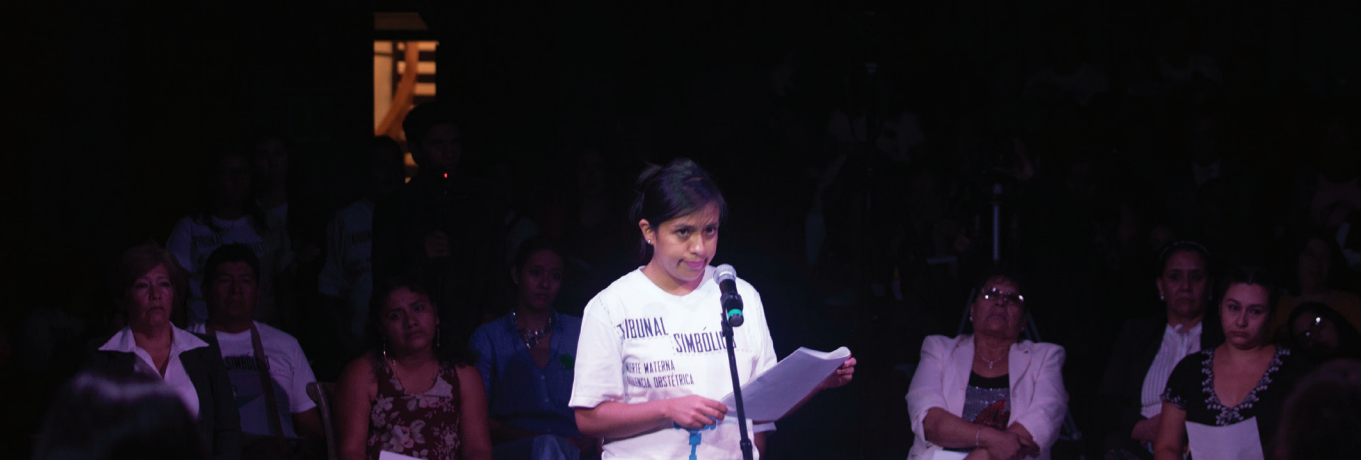
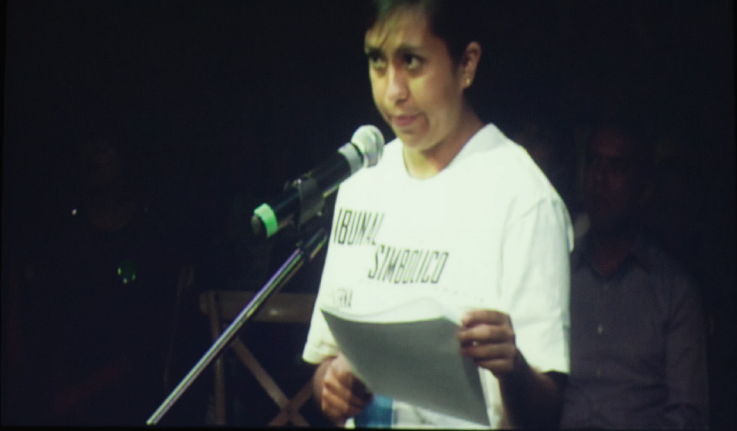
more children. The pain was increasingly stronger and a nurse said it would be like that until my baby was born. When I asked them if I could take anything for the pain, they asked me if I was going to have the operation, until finally, fed up, I said, "yes,

do the operation, I don't want to come back here for another delivery with all of you." I was very angry, I felt really ill, with severe pains and they were pestering me, that when were they going to operate on me, that I already had many children and a complication, that in

another delivery I would die.

When I authorized the tubal ligation, the doctor said to me "have they convinced you?" and she spoke to the anesthetist, but he took forever to arrive. Until I couldn't

They would insist on me having the operation to tie my tubes. I told them that my husband already had an appointment for a vasectomy and they made fun of me for believing that he would do it.



The nurses asked me if I wasn't going to have the operation, until fed-up, I said to them, "yes, do the operation, I don't want to come back here for another delivery with all of you." I was very angry, I was in a lot of pain, and they were pestering me, that when were they going to operate on me, that I already had many children and a complication, that in another delivery I would die.

stand it anymore and I started to push, then the doctor examined me and said, "to the delivery room, stop pushing my girl, the baby is here already, don't push anymore."

I heard how they were speaking to the other women and how they were saying to them, "Ma'am, be quiet, don't scream" and, "when they are making the baby, they don't scream, right?" I wasn't screaming nor did I say absolutely anything.

They performed a cesarean on me with my first child because "I was very narrow". And they were very hostile towards me because I was 15. But it was my decision, and my husband and I were happy. And in my third delivery, a doctor reluctantly stitched me up, reprimanding me because I was moving.

But I never thought that I had been badly treated. I never filed a complaint because I thought they had treated me well. It was

I never filed a complaint because I thought they had treated me well. It was only until afterwards that I discovered that I had suffered violence in all of my deliveries.



later that I realized that I suffered violence in all my deliveries. I thought that everything had gone well, because here I am and there is my baby, my body hurt all over, but here we are. I now realize that nothing went well for me, that I had very bad experiences.

I have had many complications because they tied my tubes when I was 24. Four years after the operation I got fibroids. The doctor thinks it could be because I had surgery when I was very young. The doctor says that

becoming pregnant again could help me to recover, but I can't any more. I thought of reversing the operation but it is very expensive. I asked at the IMSS and they told me that it is impossible to do a reversal.

Now they want to remove my uterus, but at the same time they tell me I am very young. I am 32.



Lidia and her sister



LIDIA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, SINALOA

Lidia's water broke in her seventh month of pregnancy and she sought attention at the hospital at Guasave. Since she was in risk of giving birth prematurely, she was transferred to the IMSS in Culiacan. There she suffered abuse from both the medical specialists and the residents. She had to wait for two days for someone to come to her assistance, until she pressured them. They then detected fetal distress. Her baby was born healthy but got an infection because of the unsanitary conditions at the hospital and died 32 days later. Lidia continues to seek justice for the loss of her daughter.

In 2015 I was seven and a half months pregnant. I went to the hospital at Guasave on June 13 because my water broke. The doctor examined me and told me that I had early rupture of membranes. I was afraid, because it was not time for my baby to be born. The doctor told my mom to buy the beta-methasone injections to develop the baby's lungs, but they only gave me the first dosage. The next day, the doctor told me that they were going to transfer me to Culiacan because they did not have a specialized area if my baby was born prematurely.

I thought I was going to a place where I would get better care and that I shouldn't be scared because specialists would be at-

tending me. In the ambulance, I went with a nurse and a doctor in case I started to go into labor. My mother and my aunt also came along.

When we arrived at the IMSS Clinic 1 in Culiacan, the gynecologist on duty examined me and performed an ultrasound. Afterwards she told me that I was having false contractions. They took me on a stretcher to the area where there were women in labor, and they left me there for two days, wearing the same diaper that they had put on me in Guasave. I spent those two nights crying in desperation because they did not attend to me. When I couldn't go on any more, I told the doctor that I felt bad and that I needed someone to examine me. He

They took me on a stretcher to the area where there were women in labor, and they left me there for two days, wearing the same diaper that they had put on me in Guasave.



My baby lived for 32 days. She was stable for the first 16 and then she was hovering between life and death, not because she was premature but because of the unsanitary conditions at the hospital. She died of neonatal sepsis.

examined me reluctantly and he hurt me because I was not dilated. He did another ultrasound and decided to perform a cesarean because the baby was exhibiting fetal distress. My family was not given any information over those two days.

In the operating room I had much stronger contractions and the residents gave me an epidural that caused me to move. They scolded me for moving and repeated the procedure until, after the sixth jab,

I asked to speak to someone. Only then did they call the anesthetist who told me that they were going to put me under general anesthetic. My baby was born on June 15 at 5:27 in the morning with a weight of 1.575 kg.

I had a bad cold and felt sharp pain in the wound every time I coughed, but they did not give me painkillers. When they took me to the ward I noticed that the lower part of my back was burn t

They repeated the epidural procedure six times. The amniotic fluid caused second degree burns.



by the amniotic fluid that had been spilling for 50 hours. It was a second degree burn. I did not know how I was going to withstand that pain. All I wanted was for morning to come so that I could go and see my baby. I felt that everything had been worth it because she was there.

My baby lived for 32 days. She was stable for the first 16 and then she was hovering between life and death, not because she was premature but because of the unsanitary

conditions at the hospital. She died of neonatal sepsis. I can't get my head around it because the baby was healthy and they took her away from me.

I left the hospital in shock. I was prescribed Alprazolam to which I was addicted for many months. I was sedated at my daughter's funeral. But not even with antidepressants is there consolation. It's not because "God wanted it that way". There are people responsible for it.



Guadalupe.



LUPITA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, ZACATECAS.

Guadalupe still doesn't know what happened and can't understand it. When her fourth daughter Fernanda was born by cesarean, she heard her cry, but she was told that she was being taken to the neonatal area because she was underweight. Guadalupe went into surgery again because the cesarean had caused a hematoma. She did not see her baby for three days but the doctors assured her that she was fine. Afterwards she found out that they operated on her daughter for an intestinal infection but that she had died two days later. The doctors at the Women's Hospital of Zacatecas refused to give her more information on the causes of Fernanda's death.

I come from the state of Zacatecas. I am 32 years old, live in a common law marriage, and I am the mother of four children: David who is 15, Juan 9, Yina 6 and Fernanda who would have been one year and ten months today.

I don't know what happened and I still haven't been able to understand it. When she was born she had traces of a white liquid in her eyes, nose and mouth, but she did cry and when I asked they said that everything was in order, that she was just underweight. We were in hospital for a few days – she for seven and me for five.

I couldn't sit down or get up, so I couldn't see how they were attending to the baby.

The nurses' pants sweep the whole hospital floor, and when there is no work they sleep on the beds. The cleaning has not been properly done, especially in the bathrooms.

What I did see was that the norms for family members are very strict, but that the hospital staff does not comply with them. They get off the bus wearing their surgical gowns, their cell phones are on all the time, and I never found out what time they

washed their hands or how they prepared themselves to touch the babies' wounds. The nurses' pants sweep the whole hospital floor, and when there is no work they sleep on the beds. The cleaning has not been properly done, especially in the bathrooms. Some of the nurses do a double shift and they sleep whenever they can. I assume that is why they are always in a bad mood.

Additionally, there is a lot of abuse towards us. When they have to remove or insert an



I may be physically complete but I feel like I am missing an arm or that something is lost because at the moment they hand us our children in a little box they cannot begin to understand the magnitude of the damage that they have caused.

object into our bodies, they do it badly. When they took out the medical probe, they practically ripped it out of me. And they say things like, “you don’t know more than me”, “they like to be here because they think it is a hotel” and “when you opened your legs it didn’t hurt you”. The treatment in the hospital is supposed to be free, but we pay for it with abuse and even with our own lives.

Maybe those who haven’t lost a child don’t understand what I’m talking about, but those who have been through a similar situation will understand it is an event that totally changes one’s life. For me it is like comparing my body to a natural catastrophe. I know that my organs existed but I don’t know where they are. I may be physically whole, but I feel like something is missing. The thing is, at the moment that they return our children to us in a box, they cannot possibly under-

The treatment in the hospital is supposed to be free, but we pay for it with abuse and even with our own lives.



stand the magnitude of the damage that they have caused.

And we cannot even cry. Our bodies and souls are in pain. It is sad to arrive with a sack full of illusions and return with the sack empty. For me the most painful thing is having held her without having been able to appreciate her eyes. They can't pay me even with their own lives for taking away all those moments that I would have had with her. And I don't want money. I

want one day to find out that things have changed.

I know that my daughter was not the first and that she won't be the last. And not even life itself would be enough time for me to explain the pain that I feel. I only hope that this will help to save other women and children.



Marielos and her parents.



MARIELOS • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, SINALOA.

When she was 13 years old Marielos was five months pregnant. It was a high-risk pregnancy because of her age. A cesarean was scheduled for her. Nevertheless, the day before, she was in a lot of pain and her parents decided to take her to the emergency room. She was made to wait seven hours before being treated. Her daughter was born and she was discharged as if she had given a natural birth. At home she started to convulse and had to return to the hospital. Her medical care only improved when she made her case public in the media, but afterwards she was once again treated indifferently.

In 2015, when I was 13 years old my family took me for a check-up because I was putting on a lot of weight. They did tests and it turned out that I was five months pregnant, with a high risk of miscarriage and pre-eclampsia. I was sent to the Los Mochis General Hospital because of the risk that the pregnancy posed. During this time I didn't want to leave school and was able to continue my studies at home.

My family was told that I would have to have a cesarean, but one day before the programmed date I started to have a lot of pain. I was taken to emergencies at the General Hospital. It felt like the baby was going to be born and I was in pain. At the hospital they made me walk, to move so that the baby would come out, but they never checked my dilation.

I am very grateful to my family and one day I want to be a doctor. I want to study nephrology.

I was 3 cm dilated, but nobody realized. They made me wait for seven hours for the operation in spite of the fact that I was high risk.

When they discharged me, I couldn't see well. When I left I was very swollen. They told me I was retaining liquids because of the pregnancy. I arrived at my house and my family says that I started to speak strangely, to convulse, to act very aggressively. I hit my family. I didn't know what I was doing, I couldn't stop hitting people, and I also couldn't see well.

My family tells me that they took me to emergencies at the Los Mochis Hospital because they knew that something was wrong. I had convulsions on the way to the hospital and I wasn't conscious of my actions.



My family says that they sent me to intensive care and induced a coma because I was retaining a lot of liquid and all my organs other than my brain were in bad shape.

They carried out tests on my head. I don't really know what tests they did because I was unconscious. My family says that they sent me to intensive care and put me in an induced coma because I was retaining a lot of liquid and all my organs except my brain were in bad shape. My liver and kidneys were very bad and my blood began to be contaminated. I needed transfusions but finding donors was very difficult because my blood-type is rare. They didn't do a transfusion during the

cesarean either even though I lost a lot of blood.

My case appeared in the media, then I was transferred to Culiacán to continue my treatment, because in Los Mochis they didn't have the necessary equipment. I spent 25 days in a coma there in intensive care. I was in intensive care for 27 days, counting the two days in Los Mochis. I was discharged but I still see a doctor in Culiacán once a month. I am registered here in Mochis as well,

My case appeared in the media, then I was transferred to Culiacán to continue my treatment, because in Los Mochis they didn't have the necessary equipment. I spent 25 days in a coma there in intensive care.



but they don't give me the medical attention that I need. My headaches have never stopped and they are very strong. I have to take medication and most of it is not covered by the *Seguro Popular*.

In Los Mochis they have washed their hands of me. They don't pay me attention even though they are the one who are responsible for what happened to me. They don't understand it because they didn't go through it, but it is difficult to not have been with my daughter in her

first two months. Only later could I see her and find out that they had given her the name that I wanted. I am very grateful to my family and one day I want to be a doctor. I want to study nephrology.



Mireya's son, her parents and her sister, Adriana.



MIREYA • MATERNAL DEATH, HIDALGO.

In June 2015 Mireya and Felipe, both 17 years old, sought help at the Obstetric Hospital in Pachuca. She was in labor and he was made to sign the authorization to perform a cesarean. Once Mireya was in the hospital, Felipe wasn't given any precise information about her state of health; they only told him was that she was fine, but he was not allowed to see her. Hours later they informed him that she had died. Mireya's son survived, and since then, Felipe's mother has taken care of him. Both Mireya and Felipe's families continue the search for someone who will take responsibility for this unjust death.

We don't want to talk about what happened because it would be reliving it. We prefer to speak about the inadequate medical care in the Obstetric Hospital of Pachuca. They need good doctors, better trained, they should not have only trainees. They should also have more care and equipment. This is what happened that time: they did not have enough equipment and there is no intensive care unit. That is why Mireya's condition deteriorated. They didn't have the necessary equipment to treat her and so they transferred her.

In the hospital, many things are wrong. For example, they don't let family members enter the emergency ward, nor do they give you information and if you go to another

area to ask for information they return you to emergencies. They don't tell you the truth, they tell you that the family member is fine, but they don't let you see her.

It would also be good if the staff on shift check on the patients more frequently, especially when a woman calls a nurse. And they shouldn't be despots. If women do not choose a contraceptive method before they discharge them, they tell them that they are not going to give them medical care. You have to sign that you are in agreement with what they give you, but they only tell you this once you are inside, they don't tell you before, and they give you the contraceptive method that they want you to

If women don't choose a contraceptive method before discharge, the staff refuse medical care. But they only tell you this once you're already in treatment, they don't tell you beforehand and they force you to accept a method.

agreement with what they give you, but they only tell you this once you are inside, they don't tell you before, and they give you the contraceptive method that they want you to



We don't need more doctors, but we need better trained ones. They should fix up the hospital because they don't have equipment. The traditional midwives were better than the present hospital. They should be better, but unfortunately it is not like that. It's not even a hospital any more, it's almost a slaughterhouse. A butcher shop.

have, without any information. They want to control the world and force the women to have what the women don't want. They don't even allow relatives to go into the consultations. The women have to go in alone. In Mireya's case, they made Felipe sign as the responsible party for the cesarean, but he is a minor, even though he was her husband.

We don't need more doctors, but we need better trained ones. They should fix up the

hospital because they don't have equipment. The traditional midwives were better than the present hospital. They should be better, but unfortunately it is not like that. It's not even a hospital any more, it's almost a slaughterhouse. A butcher shop.

Another thing that we noticed is that they didn't want to give Felipe information. Why did they make him sign if they weren't going to give him information? And what is the use of having many

It would be good if the staff on shift check on patients more frequently. And they shouldn't be despots.



hospitals if none of them are going to give you the care you need?

The state Health Ministry has published various briefs in which it says that the case is closed, when the negotiations haven't even finished. They say that Felipe, Mireya's husband, has received money. But this is not true.

After Mireya's death, Felipe's mother has taken care of the baby who survived her.

She looks after him day and night, and she takes him to his maternal grandparents' house and to her work along with her daughter who is still a teenager, who she continues to care for, but she feels a little left out because of the sudden arrival of a baby that she wasn't supposed to care for. Both of them need care.

Testimony of Adriana, Mireya's sister



The story of María was told by Marisela Sánchez Gómez, a member of the Chiapas Observatory on Maternal Death.



MARÍA VÁZQUEZ • MATERNAL DEATH, CHIAPAS.

María, from Altos de Chiapas, was 28 years old and in her seventh pregnancy. When her labor began, no midwife would care for her because a few weeks previously the Health Ministry had warned them not to. In not one of her six check-ups was it mentioned to her that she was carrying twins. She gave birth at home with the help of her mother, but Maria fainted after the two babies and placentas were expelled. The ambulance took 35 minutes to arrive and had no staff on board. Maria died on the way to the hospital at San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

In the town of Chalám, in the Mitontic municipality in the Chiapas highlands, two maternal deaths occurred in October and November 2014. The two deaths occurred one after the other with only 45 days difference.

The first was the death of a 36-year-old woman who died in her home of a hemorrhage while giving birth. It was a Saturday and the health center in her town only provides service from Monday to Friday until 3 pm. The restricted service hours and the absence of medical staff in the Chalám health facility (and in almost all the Health Ministry's establishments in the Chiapas highlands) constitute a major obstacle in access to medical services.

45 days before Maria's death, a 36-year-old woman died of a hemorrhage while being care for by a midwife because it was Saturday and the community's health center was closed.

The following week, the Health Ministry staff reprimanded all the community midwives and warned them not to perform any more deliveries and that they would go to jail in the event of a complication.

For this reason, on Tuesday, November 12 when Maria's mother was assisting her 28-year-old daughter with her seventh birth, and complications arose, no midwife wanted to help her.

Maria went for six pre-natal checkups. Her multiparity and the presence of a twin pregnancy, of which she had never been informed, meant that she should have been referred to secondary medical care in order to program a hospital delivery. But this did not happen.



The attitude of provoking fear in the midwives and criminalizing their work had as a consequence the deactivation of the healthcare and community support network, which constitutes the only healthcare service in the community.

After the birth of the first baby, when Maria's mother observed that the labor was continuing, she became scared and asked for help, but nobody came. After expelling the two babies and placentas, Maria fainted. There was no staff in the health center because it was after 3:00pm. Her brothers therefore requested a municipal ambulance from the Mitontic head of the municipality. It took 35 minutes to arrive, but the driver was alone, without any medical staff. Maria died on the way to

the San Cristóbal de Las Casas hospital 15 minutes later.

The medical staff of the Health Ministry provoked fear in the midwives and criminalized their work. In so-doing, the healthcare and community support network, which constitutes the only healthcare service in the community two-thirds of the time when the health facility is closed, was deactivated.

Maria's multiparity and the presence of a twin pregnancy, of which she had never been informed, meant that she should have been referred to secondary medical care in order to program a hospital delivery.

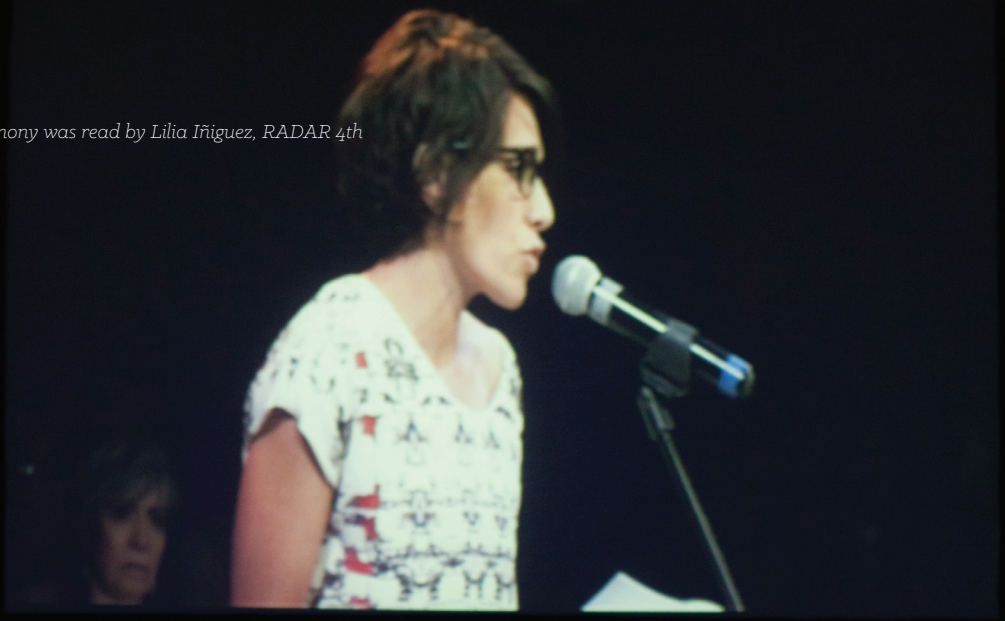


Seven months after Maria's death, the father of her children left, taking with him two children aged ten and five, and leaving behind in the care of their maternal grandparents two daughters aged twelve and seven, two sons aged fourteen and three, and the twins. The latter were registered as the children of Alicia, who is Maria's 20-year-old, single, younger sister who, together with the grandmother, is

the primary caretaker of the six children. The father has never been seen again.



Silvia's testimony was read by Lilia Iñiguez, RADAR 4th



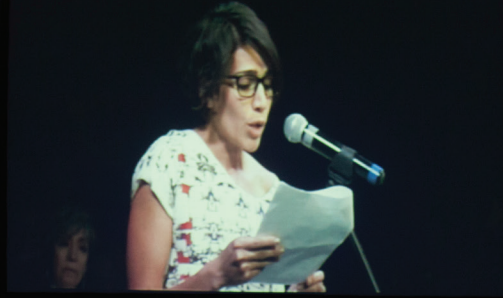
SILVIA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, CHIAPAS.

Silvia and Chankín had already been through the death of their first son due to the absence of immediate medical attention during the delivery. The day of their second delivery the doctors at the nearest hospital in Ocosingo, Chiapas, were on vacation. They therefore travelled to Villa Hermosa to the Specialized Hospital for Women. On arrival, they were received, but they were ill-treated and insulted the whole time. A cesarean was performed, their daughter was born, Silvia was discharged and she was told that she would not be given her baby until a sum of 10,000 pesos was paid and that moreover, the baby was “in delicate health”. In the end, the baby died and they were never told the cause.

For us having a child is a joy. In 2009, I became pregnant with my first son and in 2013 with a daughter. Both of them died because they did not receive immediate attention during labor. Since there are no midwives in Nahá and the doctor only comes on certain days, if we are pregnant, the health clinic tells us to go to the hospital for delivery. The nearest hospitals are in Ocosingo, two hours from Nahá by car, and Palenque, four hours away. The majority of women in Nahá prefer to have a cesarean because they tell us that a natural birth is dangerous. They also recommend that we go to midwives to “accommodate” the baby. I went to a midwife in Lacanó. I went every third day and I felt the baby move every day. We paid her a 100 pesos each time.

There are no midwives in Nahá and the doctor only comes on certain days. The nearest hospitals are in Ocosingo, two hours away by car, and Palenque, 4 hours away.

In each of my two pregnancies I went to all the prenatal appointments at the nursing home in Nahá and they always told me that everything was in order. With my first child they sent me from Ocosingo to San Cristóbal de las Casas; when I arrived they performed a cesarean but the baby was already dead. With the little girl, they sent me from Palenque to Villahermosa. There, the nurse gave me the anesthetic and shouted at me not to complain or they would send me back home to Ocosingo because there “they don’t treat people from Chiapas”. When my daughter was born, they did not allow me to see her, they told me she had liquid in her lungs and they put her in an incubator.



With my first child they sent me from Ocosingo to San Cristóbal de las Casas; when I arrived they did a cesarean but the baby was already dead. With the little girl, they sent me from Palenque to Villahermosa and there they left me in a small room with no ventilation and with no medical care for three hours.

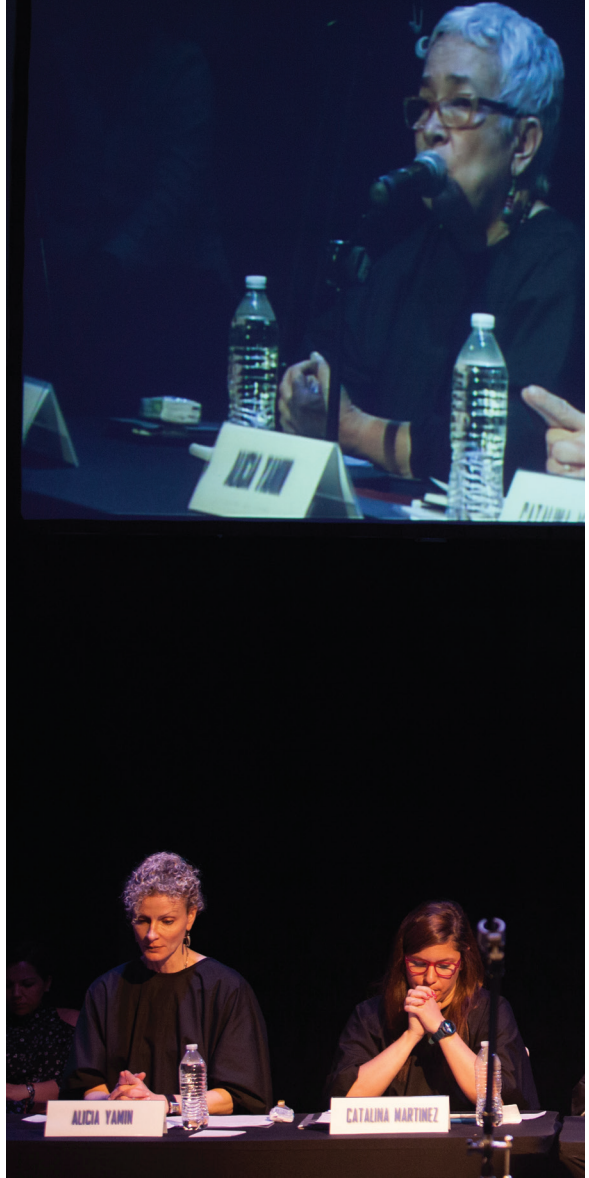
When my husband and I asked them about the little girl they told us that her health was delicate and that she had to stay in hospital for a few days. Afterwards they said that they couldn't let us have her until we paid them 10,000 pesos for the medical care. For seven days we stayed in a shelter near the hospital and we visited our daughter every morning without being allowed to hold her. On March 31, when we arrived for the visit, they told us that the little girl had died and they gave

us her body without any mention of the money they had asked for.

In May 2015 I had my third child, Chankin. GIRE was in communication with the authorities of the Health Ministry to make sure they would give me the necessary care for the baby and me to be alright.

From the pregnancy, I was afraid. I was worried that other women in the Ocosingo Hospital sometimes died along with

When my husband and I asked them about the little girl they told us that her health was delicate, and that they could not give her to us until we paid them 10,000 pesos for the medical care.



their babies. I didn't want to get pregnant again because I was afraid something would happen to me. But we want to have more children, we want to adopt a little girl.

There has been a lot of loss, it isn't fair. What we need is doctors and medicines, because they do arrive but there are not enough. The community doctor sometimes only comes once a week. One has to go to another place, even if it is night,

walk an hour to Lacandó or pay for a car which costs 100 or 150 pesos to look for a doctor in a pharmacy.



Michelle's testimony read by Julieta Hernández, RADAR 4th



MICHELLE • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, DURANGO.

Michelle arrived at the Maternal-Child Hospital in Durango before 9:00am. She had to wait more than an hour before she was let in and, despite this, was not assigned a bed but a stretcher, the same as the other women who were there to give birth. The person in charge of “looking after them” spent most of the time sleeping, only calling the doctors when Michelle called out that she had given birth on the stretcher. Her baby daughter had to be hospitalized for five days due to an infection. Afterwards she found out that her case was not unique and she therefore decided to take action. Michelle believes that she did not receive adequate treatment because she didn’t speak up.

The day I was going to give birth I arrived at the Maternal Child Hospital at around 8:40am. It took them a long time to attend to me. When they finally did, they examined me and confirmed that I was going to stay at the hospital because I was going to give birth. Once I was inside, I wasn’t well attended to, they took a long time to examine me because I didn’t say anything, I was quiet.

They put some bandages and a gown on me and left me on a stretcher. There was a woman who was supposed to be taking care of us but in fact she was falling asleep. At about 10:40am, my water broke, I told her and she kind of examined me, but she left me there on the stretcher. She went to sit down again and fell asleep again. A few minutes later I gave

birth alone, I gave birth to my daughter on the stretcher, and no one paid attention to me or attended to me when I told them.

I had to tell them that I had given birth for them to come and see me. That was when the doctors came up to me and took me to where I should have given birth. They gave me a complete examination, they told me it was a girl and in the afternoon they took me to the ward.

I gave birth alone. They left me there on the stretcher. I had to tell them that I had given birth for them to come and treat me.

Afterwards they told me that the baby wasn’t going to go home, that she was going to stay at the hospital, that they had taken blood from her and that she had been infected by something and that she had to stay there because they had to give her medication, so that she wouldn’t be-



One day I went to visit my baby and I heard that another mother had overheard the nurses placing bets on where we would have our babies: that if one of us gave birth on the stretcher then one of the nurses would bring cake and hot chocolate.

come ill when she was bigger. She was hospitalized for five days. So I would go and visit her, and on one of my visits I met another woman who gave birth the same day as me, and also on a stretcher. She told me that another woman who had had a cesarean told her that she had heard the nurses placing bets on where we would have our babies: that if one of us gave birth on the stretcher then one of the nurses would bring cake and hot

chocolate. I did not like that because they are playing with the lives of other people, they are making fun of us.

I gave birth alone. They left me there on the stretcher. I had to tell them that my baby was born in order for them to treat me. I didn't shout or complain, I think that's why they didn't pay me any attention. Yes, I told them that I was ready to give birth, but they took no notice of me.

The pediatrician told me that the baby had stay in the hospital because she had been born on a stretcher and that is not a place where people should give birth.



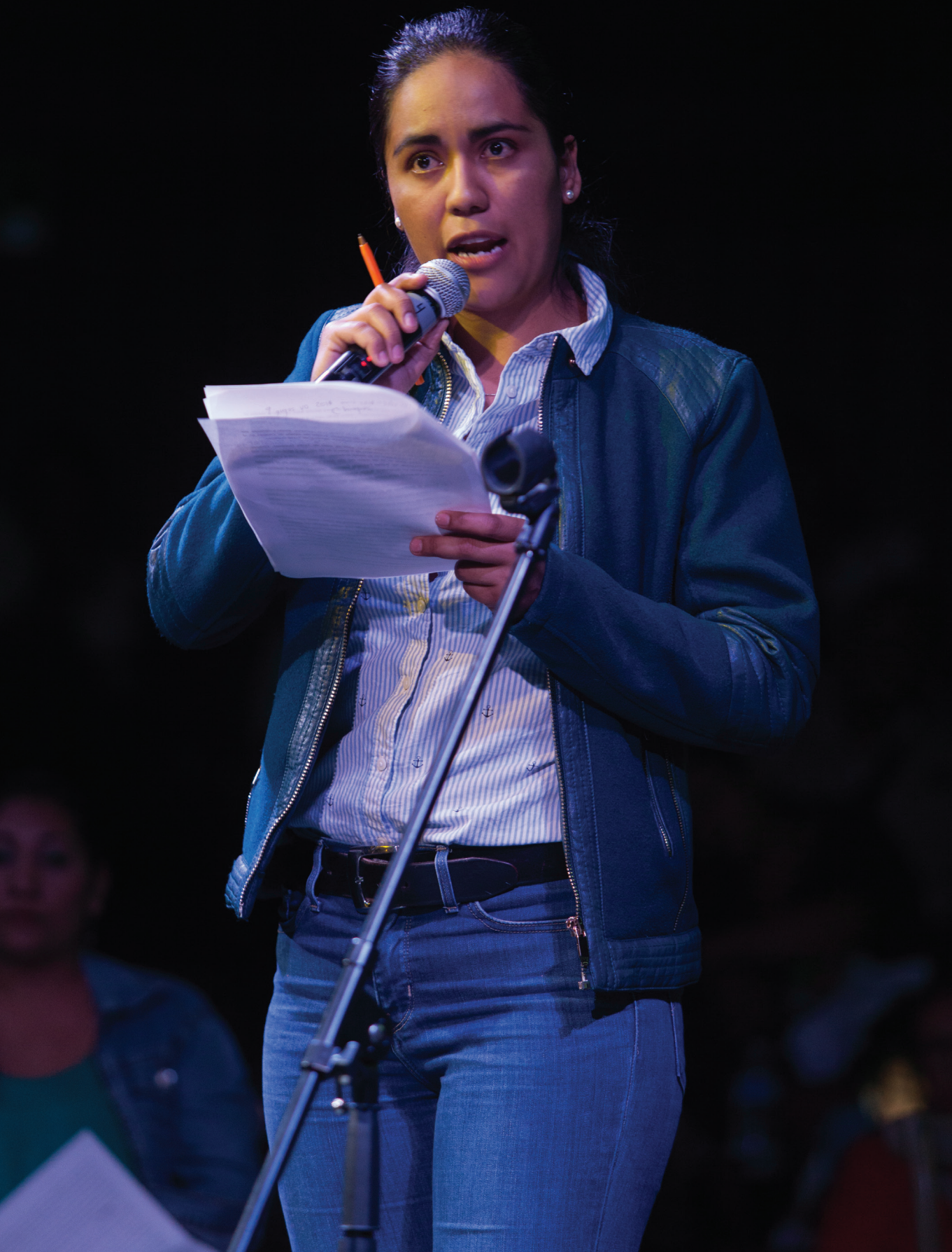
The pediatrician told me that the baby had to stay in the hospital because she had been born on a stretcher and that is not a place where people should give birth. In the hospital, there are caring people, but many are not interested in their work.

Now I am afraid that something bad will happen to my daughter later, when she is older, because of that. It would be their fault. Afterwards I asked them how it was

possible that they had left me alone. There should be someone much better trained there. The truth is that they don't care for people well. The same thing happened to the other woman, she also had her baby on the stretcher. Something more serious could have happened.



Testimony read by Lorena Gaspar, midwife in Chilón, Chiapas.



MARÍA ISAURA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, CHIAPAS.

María Isaura, a 20-year-old woman, became pregnant despite having an IUD, which she was pressured to receive immediately after her second birth. One day, while working, she fell down and started bleeding and expelling blood clots. She was taken to the Pascasio Gamboa Hospital in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, where the staff called a public prosecutor to take a statement from her, as what she had expelled were the remains of a fetus. They exhibited her as “the one who had the abortion”, they pressured her to have a new IUD fitted and submitted her to cruel treatment - showing her the remains of the fetus and proposing to use it for research.

My second birth was in the Pascasio Gamboa Hospital, a hospital belonging to the Health Institute of Chiapas, in Tuxtla Gutiérrez. From the moment I arrived they insisted on a contraception method for me. Although my husband and I had not considered an IUD, we accepted.

According to what they told me at the hospital, I was protected from becoming pregnant by a safe method. But a year and a half later I fell while cleaning the house and experienced severe pains in my stomach. The next day I again had the same pains, along with bleeding.

The pain got worse and I felt the need to push. Afterwards I found out that I was

expelling fetal and placental remains. I did not know that I was pregnant, that the IUD had failed and that I was having a miscarriage.

My mother put the remains in a black plastic bag. They called an ambulance and I was taken to the same hospital. The hospital

porter put the black bag between my legs.

At the hospital the staff asked me what I had done to provoke the miscarriage.

One of the doctors brought a man who introduced himself as an agent of the public prosecutor’s office. He asked me questions because he wanted me to confess that I had induced the miscarriage. The interrogation went on for three hours.

My mother put the remains in a black plastic bag that the hospital porter put between my legs while I was lifted into the ambulance.



The Public Prosecutor started by asking me questions which turned into a long interrogation so that I would “tell the truth” and confess that I had induced the miscarriage.

A nurse cautioned me that she had seen how “they change the conversation”, that I should read before signing – “If you don’t, you’re screwed and they can put you in jail.” The interrogation was not carried out with confidentiality: the following day they returned for me to sign my declaration and they came in shouting, “Who is María Isaura? The one who aborted?”

It took them another 24 hours to attend to me. The pain and the bleeding continued.

In all this time I was not given water or food.

In the operating room they pressured me to accept another IUD. I told them I would prefer another method. But they responded, “We either fit an IUD or we do something else or you don’t ever make it out of here”. It scared me and I signed the authorization to have the IUD fitted.

The next day, the nurse told me that I needed to see my fetus before I left the hospital. They put me in a wheelchair

They placed me at a table where there were fetuses in jars. They left me alone there facing them for a few minutes.



and took me to a dark room, switched on a red light and placed me at a table where there were fetuses in jars. They left me alone there facing them for a few minutes. Afterwards a nurse told me that my family had refused to give her a box in which to put the fetus so that we could take it home.

They showed me other fetuses and told me stories of women who did not want their babies and ended up getting rid of them. Then, the nurse put on some gloves and

opened the black bag where the remains were that I had arrived at the hospital with. She put the fetus into a jar, filled it up with a liquid, and wrote my full name in big letters on a label and stuck it onto the jar. While she was putting the remains in the jar she said, “This stays here, now you cannot take it with you, we will be keeping it for experimentation.”



Crisol's testimony was read by Silvia García from GIRE.



CRISOL • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, SINALOA.

Crisol's anguish began in her first month of pregnancy because of the threat of miscarriage. She managed to reach her fifth month by looking after herself very well, finally receiving an ultrasound from doctors at the ISSSTE. There they discovered that the fetus had various severe malformations incompatible with life. Crisol therefore requested a legal abortion. The hospital committee denied her this right, forcing her to continue her pregnancy. When Max was born, they discovered that the abnormalities were worse than anticipated. The baby lived a little over a month with no quality of life.

My distress started in my first month because of the threat of miscarriage. I went to the ISSSTE where an endocrinologist and a gynecologist supervised my pregnancy every month because of a prolactinoma stemming from my hypothyroidism and high prolactin. In my fourth month, I had a routine ultrasound and the radiologist told me that my baby appeared to have hydrocephalus. On April 7, 2015, the doctor confirmed that my baby had hydrocephalus and other facial malformations.

They sent me for tests. I asked if my baby would survive. They told me that because of the advanced gestational age they could not terminate the pregnancy and that the medical committee of the ISSSTE would have to evaluate my case.

My gynecologist explained that my baby

We felt a lot of fear and anxiety until the moment came that he died.

would not live - that it could die in my womb, or be born and live for a few minutes, hours, days or months, but in a vegetative state. I went to the Coordinator of Gynecology but he told me that the medical committee is very strict and that there was not enough evidence to authorize the termination. Much later, they extracted amniotic fluid to perform tests on the baby. It took a month for me to get the results, but since I was already

six months pregnant they didn't even pass my case on to the committee. I decided to leave everything in the hands of God and wait.

In my 35th week I went to the ISSSTE. My baby was born by cesarean section. They had to revive him because he had suffered cardiac arrest; he was in an incubator with



We took him home and there we cared for him. We were happy because now we could hold him, kiss him, now he could feel our warmth, all the people who loved him could visit him. We felt a lot of fear and anxiety. The terrible moment of his death arrived, with groans of pain he died in my arms.

oxygen and on a drip. They confirmed the hydrocephalus, malformation of his lip and palate, an under-developed arm, small ears below where they should have been, a perforated anus, heart and lung problems, an extended stomach and that he was missing various little fingers. I felt awful that I could not be with him.

The next day I was discharged and went to see him in his incubator. The pediatrician explained Max's situation to us: that

there wasn't a lot that could be done, only to wait. My Max was hospitalized, alone on a drip with oxygen. He couldn't be in the incubator for more than a month. We decided to take him home despite the fear of not knowing what to do if he had a relapse.

We were happy because now we could hold him, kiss him, now he could feel our warmth, all the people who loved him could visit him. We felt a lot of fear and

My baby was born by cesarean section. They had to revive him because he suffered cardiac arrest; he was in an incubator with oxygen and on a drip. They confirmed the hydrocephalus.



anxiety until the moment came that he died. With groans of pain my Max died in my arms.

The doctors failed to detect my baby's condition early on in the pregnancy in order to prevent my Max's suffering. He suffered conditions that no human being deserves to go through. The geneticist that GIRE took to check Max and my clinical record confirmed that the hydrocephalus was observed from the first trimester, that it was

sufficient time to authorize the termination of my pregnancy.

The doctors, inhumanely, told me that I hadn't taken vitamins or that my diet was bad. But I took vitamins and was very careful.

God and the universe lent me this beautiful angel. In my heart and mind forever, Maximiliano.



Alba's testimony was read by Ofelia Bastida from GIRE.



ALBA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, OAXACA.

The doctor at the San Antonio de la Cal Health Center did not believe Alba's mother when she told him that her daughter's deliveries were very fast, and she was told to go take a walk and wait. Alba went to walk outside while her mother went on ahead to request an ambulance. The medical staff was slow to react however, and the baby was born on the sidewalk. Alba couldn't keep hold of it and it fell to the ground. Two years after the event, the baby's health hasn't demonstrated any after-effects from the blow that it suffered, but Alba is afraid that these may present themselves in the future. Her anguish is such that she says she is always thinking about this possibility.

When my labor pains started I told my mother and she went with me to the health center. It was almost 12:30am. We knocked on the door and asked the nurse, who was sitting with the policeman, to examine me. While she was taking my vital signs, the policeman went to wake up the doctor.

He asked me how far along I was. He just felt my stomach with his hand and said that I wasn't going to go into labor yet, that when you are going to give birth the heartbeat is stronger. He told me to go back to my house. My mother told him that it was my second child and that my labor was very fast. He just laughed and said, "go home, come back if you have more pains."

They put me in the ambulance full of dirt along with my baby and took me to the health center to clean me up. The nurse half cleaned him, she didn't bathe him, she put him into the clothes given by my mother.

A few meters from my house I began to feel strong pains. I felt the pressure of the baby who was going to be born. My mom went ahead to request the ambulance. My husband stayed with me. Nobody opened up for my mother. I was walking and felt the head of the baby, I pulled down my pants, I sat down and my baby came out. I can't remember if he bumped his head, but he fell on the pavement, he slipped, I couldn't hold onto him. He is two years old now, but he could have died at that moment.

The policeman, who had brought me a wheelchair, came back when he saw my baby on the ground. He went for the doctor



The director of the health center came to see me, I don't know if it was to apologize to me or to laugh at me, and told me that I was very fortunate to have rapid deliveries, that it was a blessing; but for me it was not at all pleasant to have my baby in the street, like an animal.

who only came out then. The only ones to react were the nurse and the policeman.

At last the ambulance arrived and took us to the health facility. In the morning the director of the San Antonio de la Cal health center came to see me, I don't know if it was to apologize to me or to laugh at me. He told me that I was very fortunate to have rapid deliveries, that it was a blessing, but for me it was not at all pleasant to have my baby in the street, like an animal.

It seemed like a joke. I didn't say anything. These were no conditions for my baby to be born in, just because the doctor wanted to sleep. He didn't believe us when we told him that my births were quick. He didn't even have the decency to examine me to see if I was about to give birth. They can't begin to imagine what it is like to give birth to your baby in the street.

In two years, the health center has not changed at all. Not even with the recom-

The nurses and doctors are despots, they don't help us. But we go there because we don't have money to go to a private doctor.



mendations has it improved. I only go there to get my baby vaccinated. One day I took him there with some kind of reaction, with a rash all over his body. They told me to wait but the nurse never appeared. I had to take him to a private doctor. The nurses and doctors are despots, they don't help us. But we go there because we don't have money to go to a private doctor.

My husband starting drifting away from me because I was always worried about

my baby's health, and before my son's fifth birthday, he left me. I was alone with my two children. This was its effect on my life: the breaking up of my family and having to face everything alone.

A pseudonym has been used to respect her privacy.





ÁUREA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, QUINTANA ROO.

Áurea had to use a transvaginal catheter for 11 months and a diaper for eight months. “It’s the worst thing that has ever happened to me,” she says. She had complications starting in her sixth month of pregnancy and went to the General Hospital of Chetumal. Unaware that her uterus had been ruptured, she agreed to have her tubes tied after her cesarean. She was discharged with a fever but returned five days later with heavy bleeding. She went into a coma for eight days. She awoke from the coma but her state of health continued to decline: a failed kidney, high blood pressure, venous thrombosis, a blocked ureter. She still has to travel to Merida to be given specialized care that they do not have in Chetumal.

I work in the administrative area of the health facility that was monitoring my pregnancy. On April 21, 2015 I sought assistance there because I had pains in my feet and hands. I was in the sixth month of my pregnancy and had been told that it was high-risk because I had a marginal placenta. The health center sent me to the General Hospital where they told me I would be hospitalized.

I had unbearable pains the whole night, and it wasn’t until the next morning that a resident examined me and told me that I was between seven and eight centimeters dilated. My baby was born at 9:04am by cesarean, and she was immediately taken to Intensive Care. They did not show her to me.

I survived five surgeries, I continue to use a urinary catheter and one of my kidneys hasn’t completely recovered.

Four days later they discharged me in spite of the fact that my temperature was 38 degrees; they said it was because I had an accumulation of milk. Five days later I returned to the health center so that they could remove my stitches and that same night I started bleeding. I was taken to the emergency ward where they saw that I was still bleeding, but there were no beds and they made me sit down and wait.

While I was waiting, another doctor passed by. I asked him if he could give me something for cramps. The doctor asked me what was wrong. He lifted up the sheet and saw a pool of blood. He asked for gloves and started to remove blood clots. The last thing I remember is that they asked for adrenalin, and then I lost consciousness. I was in a coma for eight days.



Financially things didn't go well for us either: none of the medicine I need is covered by the Universal Health program. The Chetumal hospital was going to help us with the transfers to Merida but they didn't because of my accusation. Now, with the complaint in the Human Rights Commission, they don't even give me appointments.

I awoke not knowing what had happened to me. The doctors explained it to me: I had been in surgery for eight hours, they removed my uterus because it had been perforated during the cesarean, I had a fistula, I had lost a lot of blood and they inserted a tube in me to drain the liquid from the wound. Some days later they discharged me. I left the hospital with hypertension, with Type 1 anemia, but very happy to finally be able to go home.

On Father's Day I felt ill again, I had a fever and pains in my back and feet. I went to the General Hospital and they admitted me, but their ultrasound was not in service because it was a public holiday, and they took me to a private hospital. There they observed that my left kidney wasn't working and that my ureter was blocked. I have to see the urologist in the Specialty Hospital in Merida, because they won't attend to me in Chetumal unless I retract my complaint.

Every time I went into the operating room they did not know if I was going to come out. My children still cry when they hear “Mom’s going to Merida”, they say “Mom, I want to go with you”, because they no longer know if I am going to return.



I had a vaginal catheter for 11 months and for eight months I had to use a diaper. I had to be very careful not to cut myself and I went to the doctor every Friday for him to check my clotting time. They would not let me see my daughter if I had the catheter in place.

At the Health Center they did not respect disability. They did not believe that I was unwell. I survived five operations, I continue to use the urinary catheter and one of

my kidneys has not completely recovered. Financially things didn't go well for us either: none of the medicine I need is covered by the Universal Health program. The Chetumal hospital was going to help us with the transfers to Merida but they didn't because of my complaint. Now, with the complaint in the Human Rights Commission, they don't even give me appointments.



Cecilia and Mateo, her husband.



CECILIA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, CHIAPAS.

Cecilia started bleeding and went to the IMSS San Felipe Ecatepec Field Hospital near San Cristóbal de las Casas. There she suffered abuse from the nursing staff and was not transferred to Tuxtla Gutiérrez as she should have been in the event of a complication. Her blood pressure was high. She insisted on a transfer and a nurse told her that if she wanted to go, she would have to get up by herself. She tried but her vision blurred and she started to convulse. She lost consciousness. She finally underwent an emergency cesarean but the baby was born with complications and died. To date, three years later, she has not been given her baby's medical record.

I became pregnant in 2013. At my monthly check-ups they told me that everything was in order and that I was to go to the San Felipe Ecatepec Field Hospital on the day of my delivery. They said that I would be transferred to Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the event of a complication.

I started bleeding on October 2, 2013, at 11am and went to the clinic. The nurse who received me took my blood pressure, told me that I was two centimeters dilated and that I had high blood pressure. She mentioned that they would probably perform a cesarean section on me. The gynecologist arrived afterwards, he did an ultrasound and remarked that I was dilated one centimeter and that it would be a natural birth. They kept me waiting in pain for six hours.

I felt a lot of movement from the baby, but the nurse told me not to despair or strain, otherwise the baby would be born deformed.

At 6:00pm they admitted me to the delivery room and the doctor injected me with a medication to speed up the process. One of the nurses asked me what contraceptive I wanted to use. I told her that I hadn't decided and she said, "If you now know that it hurts, why aren't you going to look after yourself?"

I asked them for help many times because I was in a lot of pain. I was lucky if the nurses sometimes came up to me to see what was wrong. Then I began to feel very ill and I felt a lot of movement from the baby, but the nurse told me not to despair or strain, otherwise the baby would be born deformed.

The pains in my abdomen got worse. They called my husband and the gynecologist



My husband I and realized that the staff are only attentive when they see the two of us together but when the women are alone and in pain they are rude, they insult us and disrespect us.

immediately arrived. She told my husband that they were treating me well and, without telling me, requested his authorization to anaesthetize me, to calm me down. The doctor told me that this was how the pain was and that I would have to endure it for two or three days. When the anesthetic wore off, I asked to be transferred to another hospital. The nurse said that if I could, I should get up by myself, because my husband had given authorization for

me to stay in that hospital. I tried to stand up but I couldn't move; my vision went cloudy and I started to convulse, after that I lost consciousness.

The next day, they asked my husband to authorize an emergency cesarean. My husband told me that our son's state of health was delicate. Soon after they informed us that he had died, that he had ingested amniotic fluid.

I asked them for help many times because I was in a lot of pain. I was lucky if the nurses sometimes came up to me to see what was wrong.



I stayed in the hospital for a week. They gave me my medical records six months later, but they haven't given me my son's. They say that they were lost.

We decided to file a complaint although we knew that this was not going to bring back our baby to us. We want justice to be done. I know that in other places they allow the spouse to be present at the birth. They separate us and our partners do not know what

is happening. We also realized that the staff is only attentive to us when the two of us are together but when the women are alone, they mistreat and attack us.

My husband and I want to try again. But although we know that it is our right, after this experience we will not return to the IMSS for childbirth.



Diana..



DIANA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, CDMX.

On November 27, 2013, Diana went to the emergency ward of the IMSS General Hospital of Zone 1-A, known as the “Hospital de Venados”. There, they told her that she had to have an “urgent” ultrasound; however it took them six hours to perform it. She spent the night in darkness, with no information, and alone. The nurses came to see her, but did not tell her what was happening. It wasn’t until the next morning that they told her that she needed to have a cesarean, also “urgent”, but it was cancelled by the doctor on the next shift. The staff on that shift reaffirmed that the cesarean was urgent but her daughter Paula did not survive.

On November 27, 2013, I was admitted to the IMSS General Hospital of Zone 1-A, known as the “Hospital de Venados”. I was in my thirty-third week of pregnancy.

I was treated terribly. They scolded me because, according to them, I took too long to get there. The doctor examined me violently and said that everything was fine, but – without giving me any information – sent me for an urgent ultrasound.

It took six hours before they performed it. The same doctor reviewed it, telling me that everything was fine. However, they wanted me to do a non-stress test, after which they said that something “was strange”.

They admitted me to the labor and delivery section along with women in labor. There

were no beds and they put me in a chair. They put me on a drip and they took off my glasses. I asked them to let me keep my glasses on as I suffer from a high degree of astigmatism, and without them I see almost nothing. But they took them away. I spent the whole night in darkness and without any information.

That night they did another recording of the fetal heartbeat and the nurses moved my stomach around, but there was no beat. I did not know what that meant and, if I asked, they did not respond.

The next day they booked me for an emergency cesarean. The doctor on duty and the director of the hospital analyzed the report and said “she can still hold on”, but they did not speak to me.

I had my dead daughter in my womb for a total of nine hours, listening to other babies being born.



They put me in a chair, they put me on a drip and they took off my glasses. I asked them to let me keep my glasses on as I suffer from a high degree of miopia and astigmatism, and without them I cannot see hardly anything. But they took them away.

They did a Level 2 ultrasound and the technician said that I was crazy, that I was “making believe I was important”, that he could see on the screen that the baby was moving. I said that I could not see her and he dismissed me!

The doctor on duty never reviewed the ultrasound and they returned me to the operating room. They cancelled the cesarean without giving me any information. The doctor on the next shift was annoyed because his colleagues had cancelled the emergency cesarean,

but six hours went by before they did a tracing with the *doppler*. There was no heartbeat and nobody told me anything.

A Level 3 ultrasound confirmed that my baby had died. They said they would induce labor. I requested a cesarean but they turned me down. I had to wait for an angiologist who would induce my delivery to evaluate my case because I suffer from a medical condition that does not allow me to push. I had my dead daughter in my womb for a total of nine hours, surrounded by

There were no beds and they put me in a chair. They put me on a drip and took off my glasses.



women with their children, listening to other babies being born.

I did not know what kind of cesarean they performed, nor did they tell me that they had fitted me with an IUD. And a nurse said to me, “you clearly did not look after yourself, you will have to next time.” What did she know about how much this pregnancy means to me and how much I look after myself?

Nobody told me that I had milk. All they did was bandage my breasts and give me

medication to stop lactation, without explaining that it had side effects.

These types of deaths, invisible, minimized, have to be prevented. I went through a silent mourning because society thinks that because it is a baby there is no pain.

I filed a claim against the doctor who cancelled the emergency cesarean (RESP/17/2015) which remains unresolved. I now know that my daughter had severe fetal suffering. They knew that the cesarean was urgent when my daughter was still alive.



Irma, her husband and their three children.



IRMA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE OAXACA.

At 6:00am on October 2, 2013, Irma, a thirty-year-old Mazateco woman, sought medical care at the San Felipe Jalapa de Díaz Health Center in Oaxaca, because she felt that it was time for her baby to be born. This was her third child. The facility caretaker, after taking half an hour to open the door, told her that the nurse was showering. Another 20 minutes went by before the nurse, without examining her, told Irma to walk for a while because the baby would not be born yet. Irma followed the nurse's instructions and a few meters away her water broke. Her baby came out of her womb and fell onto the lawn. The photograph of that moment was published on social media and the case became internationally known.

It was my third pregnancy. I was in my thirty-sixth week when I started to have labor pains and went to the San Felipe Jalapa de Díaz Health Center. I was there knocking on the door at 6:00am but nobody answered. After half an hour, I saw a cleaner and told her that I was in pain, but the nurse was showering. I waited for another 20 minutes. When she came out, she told me that my baby would not be born yet, and she made me go to walk. There were no doctors at the Center, but Dr. Telesforo lived a little ways down the road.

I walked to the corner. I felt that my water had broken and moments later my baby was born on the lawn, without the help of any doctor. They gave me medical assis-

tance afterwards, when they found out that my baby was lying on the ground. When they came out, they scolded me because I hadn't informed them. But I had gone for help before my baby was born because I was in pain, but as they told me no, I gave birth to my baby outside, like an animal.

They attended to me afterwards, when they found out that my baby was lying on the ground. They came out to pick him up and they scolded me because I hadn't informed them.

Somebody put my photo on internet and the same nurse who had attended to me in the beginning said to me, "your photo is really ugly. Who took it?" They wanted to find the lady who had taken my photo. They asked me, and they called my husband so that

he would get angry, so that we would fight with her. But no, because my husband was with me when I was in pain, he saw that the nurse didn't do anything.



As someone put my photo on internet, the same nurse who had attended to me in the beginning said to me, “your photo is really ugly. Who took it?”

Two policemen arrived and they asked me if that was what had happened to me, and I said yes. “And if they come and ask, you tell the truth.” I told them everything. If I keep quiet the clinic will continue as it is. They are on strike. If my children get sick, I have nowhere to take them. For the past two years they have only been taking in emergencies.

Before the birth I had appointments and I always went. Now I don’t go anymore

because they take no notice of us. I go to the social assistance program given to us by the federal government; it started in February. I have to go to all of the ones called “Progresas”. They threatened to take away my support. I missed one day when my baby was born. You can’t miss any because if you do, they’ll take it away.

Here they don’t give me any kind of service. They didn’t give me a contraceptive. I had to go to Mexico City and there they gave

They made me buy all the medicine that they gave me, saline solution, diapers, I bought everything.



it to me. I don't want to get pregnant again, it's very expensive. I don't want the child to suffer. I have bought him all that I could up to now. But I can't anymore even though I am working now. This is a ranch, sometimes there is money and sometimes there isn't. My contraception is very expensive now, and on top of that the private doctor charges us \$1,500 pesos. I take my child but they give me the medicine on credit, which I pay off whenever I can.

I don't want this to happen again, that the same thing that happened to me does not happen to the women who are about to become pregnant.



Raquel and her father.



RAQUEL • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, ZACATECAS.

Raquel went to the Intensive Care Unit of the IMSS in Zacatecas because her baby had stopped receiving oxygen from the placenta. A private doctor had informed her that she needed an urgent cesarean, but at the IMSS they did not listen to her, even though she had the results of the tests with her. She insisted that the doctors and nurses assist her with the delivery of her baby, but they ignored her. The baby died in Raquel's womb; they delayed the induction of the delivery for such a long time that she also had to have curettage. For her recovery, she was put in the ward with women and their newborn babies.

On October 18, I felt little fetal movement compared to other days, but my appointment with the private doctor was on the following day and so I decided to wait. I was seven and a half months pregnant. I told him that I had noticed that the baby was moving slowly. He did an ultrasound and sent me to the hospital in San Agustín for a recording of the fetal heartbeat. I was there and back in half an hour. The doctor looked at the results and said that they had to take the baby out at that moment: apparently it wasn't receiving oxygen from the placenta.

The doctor told me that the baby had a 99% probability of life if he was removed at that moment. He suggested that the most convenient thing would be to go to the public

health center because they have a neonatal intensive care unit there.

There they connected me to measure the frequency of the baby's heart, but the doctor

When the doctor realized that the baby's heartbeat could no longer be heard, he said "this has never happened to me before" and he left the ward. They still did not attend to me.

on call never appeared. The doctor on the next shift examined me and said "I cannot get rid of your pregnancy. I told him that my doctor said that it was urgent, but he said, "You are at seven and a half months. If I take it out now, I don't

know if it will live." I showed him the paper from the test. But he left.

They continued to monitor me without telling me anything. I was in a ward with women giving birth but my baby wasn't moving. Nobody paid me any attention.



I sued the doctor who refused to deliver my baby. But they protected him. They even promoted him to head of that area. I hoped that they would sanction him. Here so many babies die that people see it as normal.

The other women were injected with things to make them have fast deliveries. A few babies were premature and were born on the stretchers. When the doctor returned, I asked him if he could deliver it then and he said that they had already decided that they were not going to. He said, "I'm going to inject you with a lung strengthener and I am going to deliver it in four weeks" and he left.

At dawn, when they had finished with all

the deliveries, he said that he was going to sleep. The baby's heart could be heard on a loudspeaker throughout the ward. I told the resident on call that the heart-beat sounded different, accelerated, and arrhythmic. He approached me with a stethoscope to hear, I put my hand on my stomach and the baby jumped. Then no sound was heard.

So the resident went to wake up the specialist, but he didn't do anything either.

The baby's heart could be heard on a loudspeaker throughout the ward. I told the resident on call that the heartbeat sounded different, accelerated and arrhythmic.



The doctor on the next shift didn't arrive until 8:00am. He went from bed to bed, scolding all the patients and when he came up to me he said, "And why are you so sad?" Then he saw the file and said, "Ah. And did they give you something to remove it?" I told him that they hadn't and he gave me a dilating gel every two hours. But I never dilated. And then it was the turn of the next shift. The next doctor gave me a tablet to provoke contractions because I had had the dead baby in my abdomen for many

hours. After they removed it, they said to me, "look at your baby, it's really beautiful."

I sued the doctor who refused to deliver my baby. I felt it was very serious that he had gone to sleep. But they didn't sanction him. In fact, I think they made him head of the area. They gave me a monetary compensation to comply with the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission. But that is not enough.



Isela with her family.



ISELA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AND NEONATAL DEATH, QUINTANA ROO.

This was to be Isela and Marco's first child, the little brother of Brian, Isela's older son. When the last ultrasound was performed, she was informed that there was hardly any amniotic fluid, that the baby was small and undernourished, but they assured Isela that it would recover if it was well-nourished once born. The day that Isela arrived at the emergency section of the IMSS in Chetumal, she was programmed for an urgent cesarean. She was given a general anesthetic and when she awoke she was told that her baby had died.

In March 2014, I did a pregnancy test and it was positive. I cried tears of joy. All my follow-up was done at the IMSS in Chetumal. In mid-March they performed the first ultrasound, I was 13 weeks pregnant. They told me that the baby was doing well, that it was a good size in keeping with its term.

They didn't do the second ultrasound until my eighth month. They told me that the baby was healthy and that it was a boy, but that it was very small. They performed the last ultrasound in my thirty-eighth week and the doctor said that there was very little amniotic fluid, that the baby was small and undernourished. A doctor at a private clinic explained to us that there was very little

amniotic fluid, but with good nourishment the baby would grow normally.

On December 19 I smelled bleach when I urinated and we went to the emergency room. They admitted me and said that they would perform a cesarean. The nurse told me that the gynecologist, Martin Miranda Trejo, was very rude. He asked me why I was there and he barely let me explain before

shouting at me, "I'm not interested in ultrasounds!" He examined me manually and then with a speculum, shouting, "there is nothing wrong with you!" I started to feel unwell there: my abdomen hurt a lot and became hard. Then a student doctor came to check the baby's heartbeat and he told

"The truth is that I had virtually no money to bury my baby, I asked for help, even on the radio. I had to play the place where the little body of my baby was being held, it was approximately \$7,000 pesos":

Marco, Isela's husband.



A gynecologist gave me some papers to sign when I was not completely conscious. She told me that the baby had been born dead, that the placenta was detached, and that my baby had choked on amniotic fluid. I did not take it in, my world fell apart, I felt that I no longer had a reason to live.

me that it was normal but I felt a little liquid come out. I told him I wanted to pee and he told me to calm down and that it was going to be a natural delivery. But when I looked, the whole bed was covered in blood. So the student spoke to the gynecologist, Dr. Quiroz, who performed another manual abdominal examination and checked the baby's heartbeat. They prepared me for an urgent cesarean.

When I woke up I asked them to take me to see my baby, but they refused. The gynecologist just gave me some papers to sign because, according to her, there hadn't been time for my husband to sign them. I signed, but I was still not completely conscious after the anesthetic. She told me that the baby had been born dead, that the placenta was detached, and that my baby had choked on amniotic fluid.

My husband and I walked to the car, we got in, and I felt that it was hurting. I lifted up my dress and saw that my wound was open.



One week after they discharged me, I had to return for them to remove the stitches. It hurt a lot when they took them out. My husband and I walked to the car and we got in, but it was hurting me a lot. I lifted up my dress and saw that my wound was open again. We returned to emergencies, my husband said to the assistant, “the wound opened” and he answered “wait here” with me almost fainting.

At the IMSS in Chetumal there are only two pieces of equipment to do all the ultrasounds, not only the obstetric ones. When they program you, there can be a three-month wait. They should have more information about obstetric violence in the hospitals so that women can be informed and be protected.



Liliana, her husband Paco and their daughter.



LILIANA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE, QUINTANA ROO.

In November 2013, Liliana went into labor and sought medical care at the IMSS in Chetumal. Her baby daughter was born by cesarean. The surgeon perforated her bladder causing an infection. Nobody acknowledged the error or did anything to improve the state of her health. Liliana was assured that her persistent fever was “normal”. She asked her family to take her to a private clinic where her life was saved. She had to have her uterus removed, however, thereby drastically affecting her reproductive plan. Now, Liliana and her husband Paco want to adopt a second child. Despite the complaints made against him, the doctor who treated Liliana continues to attend to pregnant women.

I am 31 years old and what I went through was a painful experience that has marked me, but it also allowed me to see myself as a brave woman. My husband Paco and I always wanted to have four children, and on November 12, 2013, I went to the IMSS in Chetumal in labor with my first daughter.

I was in labor for nine hours and the doctor told me that everything was fine. But the doctor on the next shift told me that he was going to perform a cesarean. I asked him if he could induce the baby and he said, “If that’s what you want. I am going to continue with my rounds and will be back in half an hour. Your baby is fine now, but if it suffers fetal distress afterwards it is your responsibility.” I accepted to have the cesarean out of fear.

When I awoke after the cesarean the pain in my stomach was very intense, I also had a fever and I was discharged in that condition two days later.

When I awoke the pain in my stomach was very intense and got worse as the hours went by. I also had a fever. They discharged me in that condition two days later. I returned to the hospital on November 16 and was hospitalized for four days after which I was discharged but the pain was unbearable and my fever didn’t subside. The doctors said that it was normal for a cesarean.

I went to a private clinic for an ultrasound and they found a 200 ml hematoma. I returned to the IMSS clinic and was treated by the same doctor who had performed the cesarean. He was indifferent to my situation. So my family and I decided to go to a private clinic. There they discovered that I had internal bleeding and a perforated bladder, it was



My husband and I always wanted to have four children. What happened totally changed our plans because I could only have one daughter from my womb. I do not have a uterus but I have dreams and the greatest one is that my daughter, if she decides to become a mother, does not have to go through what I did.

very serious. I underwent surgery twice: once to remove putrid blood and clots and then to take out my uterus. With that, the fever that I had had for 18 days receded.

This situation, which was forced upon me, completely altered our plans because I could only have one baby in my womb. A daughter that I could neither breastfeed nor care for in her first months.

Some of the most difficult things about

this experience are the negative comments from people we work with in our jobs, as both Paco and I work in health institutions. When my case was published in the media, many doctors united against us for defending our rights. It is very hard for us to be judged for something that they don't understand.

I now know that the problem is not the doctor who attended me. The problem is bigger, it is the protection that the system

I was discharged but the pain was unbearable and my fever didn't subside. The doctors said that it was normal for a cesarean.



awards him. I imagine that when a doctor does something wrong they should reprimand him. But that doesn't bring back a life, or a womb, or one's peace of mind.

Today, after going to therapy and being able to enjoy my daughter who brings me a lot of happiness, I realize that this experience made us much stronger as a couple. Now we have new plans, last March we started the paperwork for the adoption process. I do not have a uterus today but I have dreams

and the greatest one is that my daughter, if she decides to become a mother, does not have to go through what I did.





AMELIA • OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

Amelia found out that she was HIV positive when she was 22 years-old. At the time, she already had a 2-year-old son with her husband. She found out she was positive when she began her second pregnancy. For nine months during the pregnancy, Amelia experienced pressure from the doctor so that, once her son was born by cesarean section, she receive tubal ligation. Amelia never gave the doctor permission to do the procedure. When the couple planned another pregnancy, Amelia stopped taking her birth control pills, but a year passed and she did not become pregnant. She went to a gynecologist and discovered why she was not becoming pregnant: the doctor that had pressured her during her last pregnancy had performed the tubal ligation without her consent.

I was 22 years old and in my fourth or fifth month of pregnancy when I went to the hospital and a doctor said to me, "I know why you're here, but wait for me here, I am going to speak to your husband." And I waited there very confused, with my two-year-old son. My husband left the health facility very angry and I stayed with the doctor, who said to me, "Ma'am, don't make fools of us. You knew that you had AIDS and that you are going to die so go and find someone to take care of your children."

The first months were very difficult. I really believed that I was going to die as soon as my baby was born. A doctor kept harassing me to get sterilized. Every time he saw me he asked me if I was going to have the

operation and I always said I wasn't. He told me that I could not have more babies in my condition, "plan on the fact that you are going to die," he said.

On the day of the cesarean, I made up with my husband. He told me that he was always going to support me and that we were going to start again. So I saw another panorama and understood that we only have one life and that we have to enjoy it to the fullest.

Six years went by and I stopped taking contraceptive pills. One more year passed and I didn't become pregnant. I went to a doctor who asked me how I hoped to become pregnant if I was sterilized. Sterilized? "Yes, they performed the tubal ligation," he said.

He said I should be grateful that I was not going to bring "AIDS-bearing" children into the world.



“Ma’am, don’t make fools of us. You knew that you had AIDS and that you are going to die so go and find someone to take care of your children.”

I went to look for the same doctor who had performed the cesarean and I said to him, “six years ago I gave birth here, you performed the cesarean and you were always pestering me that you were going to do the operation and even though I said no you did it.” He said that he did not remember my case.

I said to him, “I am HIV positive and you always used to say to me that I was going to die. Six years later and I have not died.

I want to have another child.” He said I should be grateful that I was not going to bring “AIDS-bearing” children into the world. It made me very angry. Why do doctors take so many liberties in deciding over a woman’s body?

He should understand that he was wrong. He did not only do it to me, but to many women. He violated our rights and he may still be doing so and many women are not aware of it. I had no idea what my

I went to a doctor who asked me how I hoped to become pregnant if I was sterilized.



rights were. I thought it was what the doctor said: if the doctor says so, then you do what he says.

The fact that women do not complain does not mean that we do not exist. We exist, and there are many of us, and they just see it from the outside and say, “Take these pills and don’t have any children because you are going to die.” We are not even going to die from that. I am certain. I don’t know of what I’m going to die of,

but I’m certain that I am not going to die of that.

For her security her place of origin is not being revealed.





Alda Facio

Lawyer, member of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

Alicia Yamín

Professor of Global Health and Law (T.H. Chan School of Public Health) at Harvard University.

Catalina Martínez

Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Center for Reproductive Rights.



Gladys Acosta

Sociologist and lawyer, independent expert on the CEDAW Committee, 2015-2018.

Julissa Mantilla

International consultant on gender and justice.

Sandra Oryazo

Midwife and professor at the University of Chile School of Obstetrics.

Recommendations

Health care

TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES: Guarantee sufficient allocation of funds within the Federal Budget for health, IMSS and ISSSTE, to ensure the improvement and scope of health infrastructure, equipment, supplies and appropriate salary and labor conditions for medical staff.

Access to health services: rejected

TO THE FEDERAL HEALTH MINISTRY, IMSS, ISSSTE AND STATE HEALTH MINISTRIES:

- Guarantee universal access to women at obstetric health services, specifically during labor.
- Ensure the implementation of referral and counter-referral networks for system users, independently of their affiliation and economic capacity.
- Connect and consolidate care in primary services with preventive actions and care, taking advantage of the available infrastructure, ensuring prompt referrals and a functional care network with secondary and tertiary care services for the resolution of obstetric urgencies.

Elimination of obstetric violence: cruel and inhumane treatment

TO THE FEDERAL HEALTH MINISTRY, IMSS, ISSSTE AND STATE HEALTH MINISTRIES:

- Identify obstetric violence as a form of institutional and gender violence -recognized by the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence and by state laws - to prevent and eradicate its practice.
- Guarantee the presence of interpreters for women who do not speak Spanish during prenatal consultations.
- Encourage pregnant women and women in labor to know and understand their rights, recognize their decisions, and ensure that health services are provided only with informed consent.

- Ensure that health service personnel work in a suitable environment with sufficient infrastructure, and that their labor rights are recognized and protected.

TO THE FEDERAL AND STATE CONGRESSES: Do not include obstetric violence as a crime in federal and state penal codes.

TO THE CHIAPAS, STATE OF MEXICO, GUERRERO AND VERACRUZ CONGRESSES: Reform penal codes to eliminate obstetric violence as a crime.

Staff training

TO THE FEDERAL HEALTH MINISTRY, IMSS, ISSSTE AND STATE HEALTH MINISTRIES:

- Certify the technical capacities of health personnel involved in pregnancy, labor and postpartum care.
- Strengthen the training and certification of health care professionals, in addition to doctors such as midwives and obstetric nurses, to progressively incorporate them into maternal health services.

Access to justice

TO THE FEDERAL HEALTH MINISTRY, IMSS, ISSSTE AND STATE HEALTH MINISTRIES: Ensure the existence and functioning of simple and prompt complaint mechanisms in hospitals that attend deliveries.

TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, STATE COMMISSIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER COURTS: Ensure access to justice and full reparation to victims of obstetric violence according to the highest human rights standards and take into account the requests of the victims, following up with the implementation of these recommendations and guaranteeing the best interest of the child in cases where it is required.

TO CONAMED AND STATE COMMISSIONS FOR MEDICAL ARBITRATION: Strengthen complaint mechanisms, removing obstacles and facilitating access to decisions in accordance with human rights standards



Symbolic Court on maternal mortality and obstetric violence
A remembrance

The Symbolic Court on maternal mortality and obstetric violence and this publication were achieved through the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, UN Women Mexico and the UN Office of the High Commissioner in Mexico (OHCHR).

Design: Elena Rojas Parra
Editing: Mariana Roca Cogordan
Photography: Paola García y Fungifilms
Cover image: Paola García
Translation: Julie Salisbury

Symbolic Court on maternal mortality and obstetric violence
A remembrance

We encourage the public distribution of this work and of the data contained herein as long as the correct authorship is recognized. The dissemination of this work is free and should never be used for commercial purposes.

2016 Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida, A.C.
Coyoacán, C.P. 04030, Mexico City
Telephone: 5658.6684
correo@giremx.org.mx
gire.org.mx
http://tribunal-simbolico.gire.org.mx
f: GrupodelInformacionenReproduccionElegida
t: @GIRE_mx