
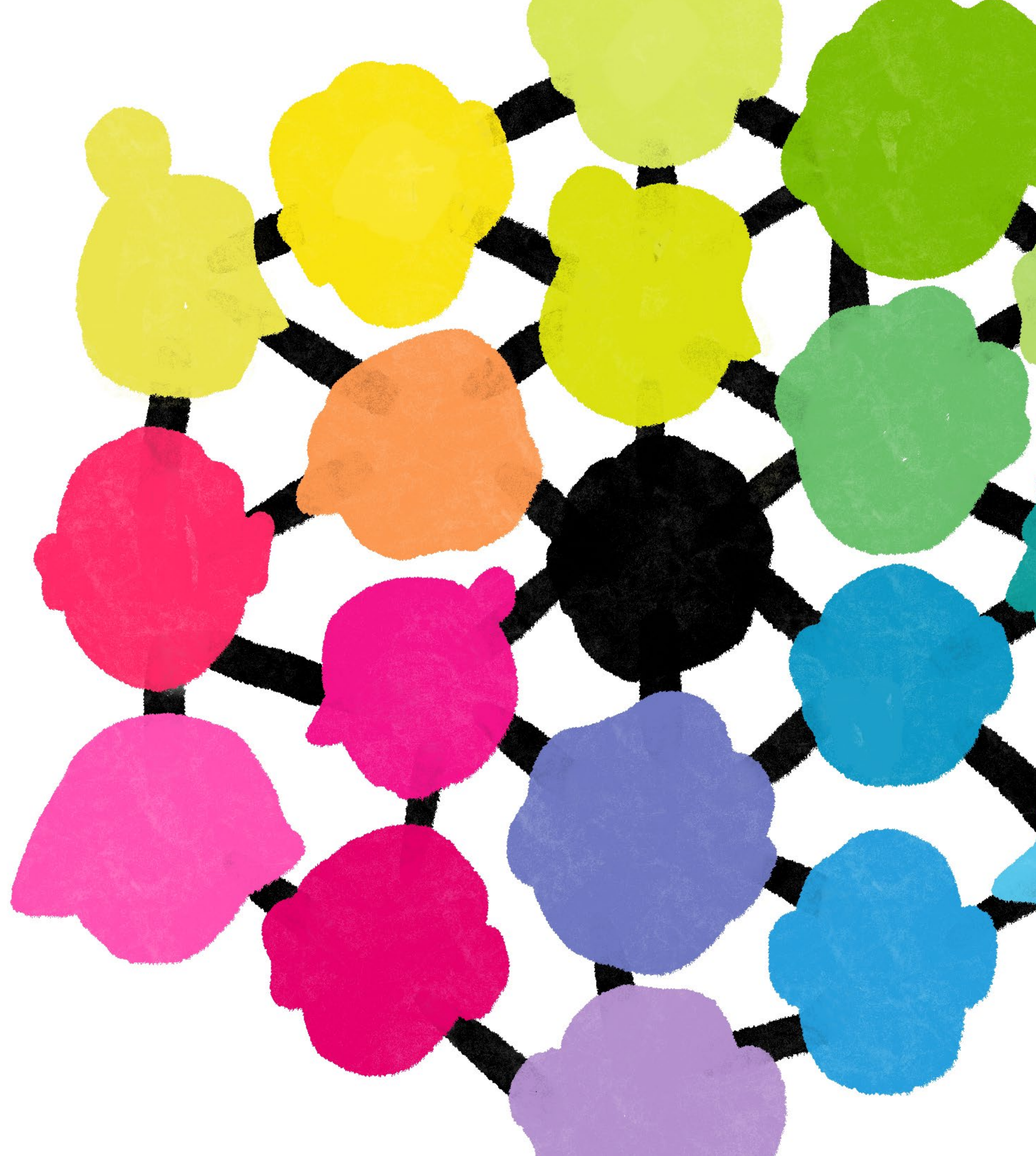


# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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# ABOUT US



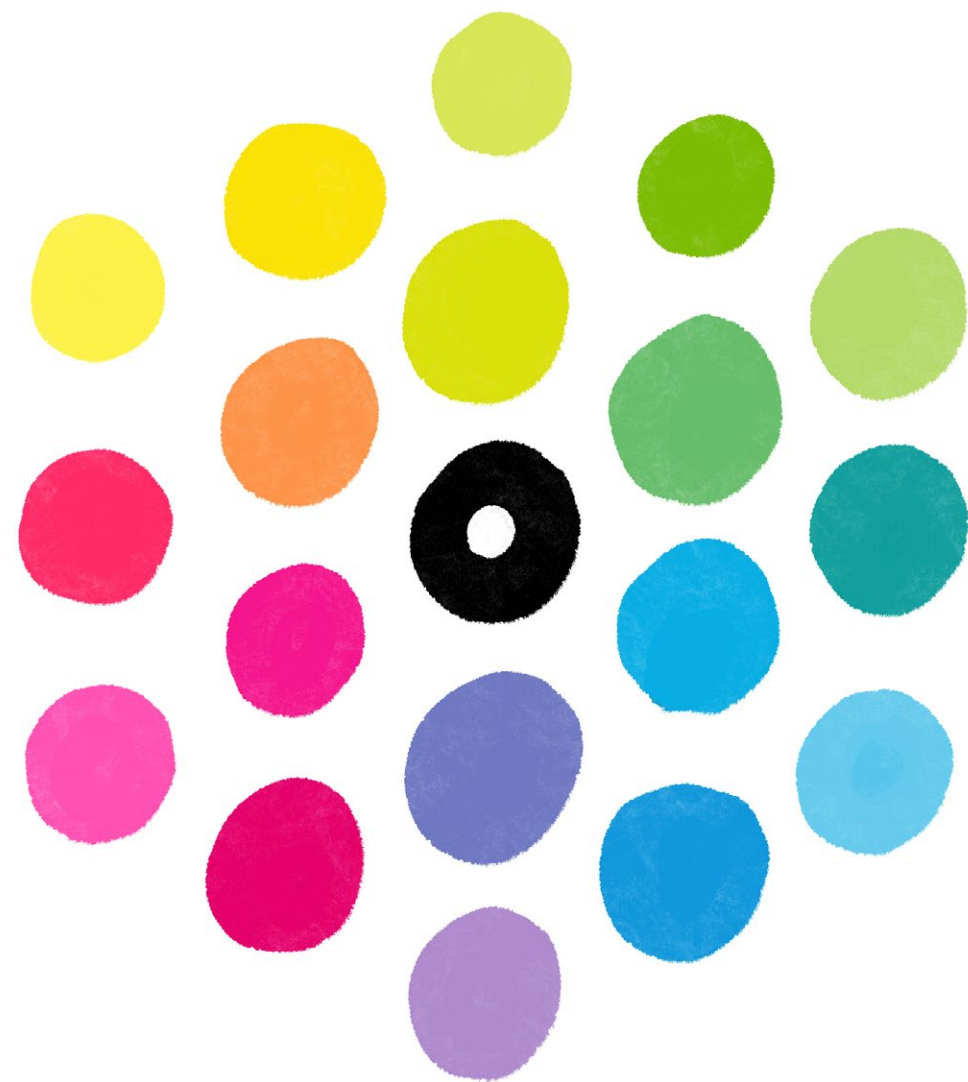
We are an independent Mexican non-profit organization that encourages and carries out investigative journalism projects which empower citizens, strengthen accountability and help build a more just and transparent society.

In 2022 [we celebrated five years](#) advising, producing and publishing outstanding journalist investigations, some of which have been awarded with multiple recognition. During our first five years, we've also dedicated our efforts to bringing new tools to journalists in Mexico so they may carry out their work in a safest, more innovative and professional way.

Inequality, impunity and corruption continue to affect Mexico's daily life. This is the reason why we are committed to investigations that expose the asymmetries, abuses, and failures of the powerful, as well as the imbalance in the exercise of citizen rights.

We want to help build a society in which the majority have a more dignified, full and fair life. That's the side we stand on.

We do not take up causes or flags; we don't undertake battles of parties or groups of political interest. We do journalism with honesty, independence, excellence and plurality.



# OUR STORIES AND THEIR IMPACT

This is a selection of the most relevant investigations we published throughout the year. Some of them are stories that we incubated and guided with advice, production and funding, after a jury chose them from among dozens of applications we received through our public call. Others are investigations carried out by our in-house team, and some others are investigations carried out in alliances with various organizations and media outlets.

# Fragments of the Disappearance

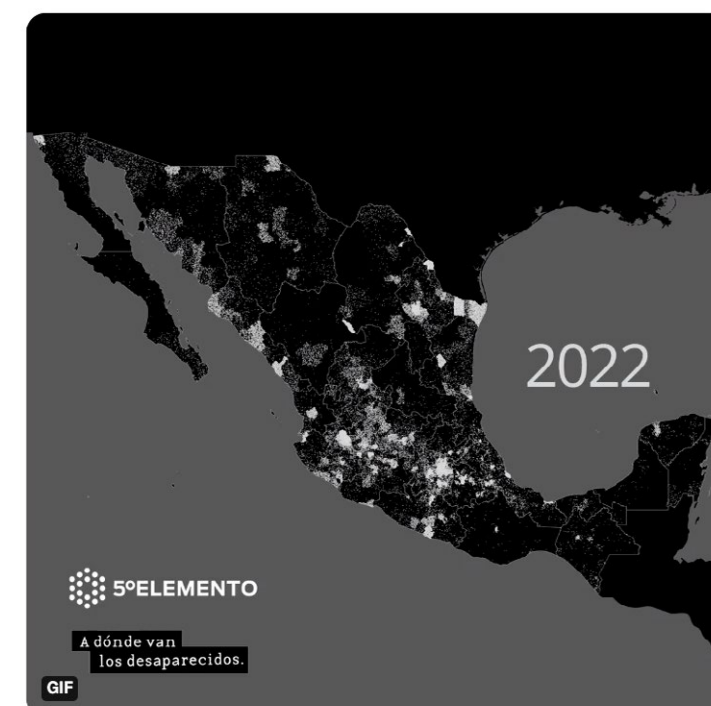
On May 16th 2022, Mexico reached the figure of [100 thousand missing people](#), according to official government records.

We knew this tragic record would arrive, which is why the Quinto Elemento Lab team and the initiative [“Where do the Disappeared go”](#), worked in advance to build and to analyze an enormous database in order to identify patterns and keys that will deepen the understanding we have of this crime’s phenomenon and dynamics.

[“Fragments of the Disappearance”](#) was a special project published weekly as a series during May and June 2022. In addition to the stories investigated by journalists in key areas, the project displayed for the first time the visualization of the data and trends of disappearances in Mexico from the 60s to the present day.

Alongside MORLÁN, a data analysis consultancy, [we devised a method](#) to show which were the epicenters of disappearance in Mexico from the start of the so-called war against drug trafficking in 2006, and the patterns which emerge according to the geolocalization, temporality, gender or age.

The findings of this investigation were published or quoted by more than 60 media outlets in Mexico and abroad, and the project was nominated by the Gabo Foundation as one of the best journalistic coverages of the year.



4:51 PM · May 16, 2022 · Twitter Web App



6:14 p. m. · 16 may. 2022 · Twitter Web App

# SocorroBot

During 2022, an average of 15 people disappeared each day in Mexico.

In alliance with fellow organizations Codeando México and Técnicas Rudas, and with information designer Yosune Chamizo, we developed a Whatsapp bot which helps people in Mexico and abroad who are looking for missing friends or family members in the country. The tool offers them vital orientation to begin their search during the first hours of the disappearance.

We named the tool SocorroBot and we made it public on [August 30th](#), the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. Socorro is a woman's name and is also a cry for help. The [chatbot](#) contains information compiled from official institutes and government agencies at federal, state and local levels, and it learns from the experience of missing people's relatives and experts to guide people on what to do and where to go when a disappearance occurs.

SocorroBot is an expression of solutions journalism and it translates data and information generated through the reporting of our collaborators network into useful information for citizens.

More than 100 media outlets in Mexico and abroad — including CNN, Televisa and Univision— shared the launch of the bot with their audiences and let them know how they could interact with it.

Throughout the first six months since its launch, more than 1,300 people had interacted with SocorroBot, that's an average of seven people per day.

# #SocorroBot



**Guarda el contacto de  
#SocorroBot  
ojalá nunca tengas que usarlo**

**55 9**



**SOCORROBOT**  
TE DA INFORMACIÓN SOBRE EL  
PROCESO DE BÚSQUEDA O  
DECLARACIÓN DE LA DESAPARICIÓN  
DE UNA PERSONA EN MÉXICO



# Journey to the center of Odebrecht

Five years after the Brazilian Odebrecht's corruption scandal splattered the Latin American government and business elites, journalists from the Latin-American Network of Structured Investigative Journalism decided to inquire into what happened with the official investigations in nine nations.

[“Journey to the center of Odebrecht”](#) consisted of a series of articles published by nine Latin-American media outlets and organizations. The project analyzed the type of sanctions that were imposed on officials corrupted by the company, compared if the governments had achieved in collecting fines, and reviewed the actions of their justice systems.

Published in July 2022, the investigation found that the governments had recovered little to nothing of the money which ended up being a loot of millions in bribes and illegal contributions that fell into the hands of public officials.

Coordinated by Quinto Elemento Lab, the participating media were La Nación (Argentina), Metr  poles (Brazil), el Centro Latinoamericano de Investigaci  n Period  stica (Colombia), El Universo (Ecuador), La Prensa (Panama), IDL-Reporteros (Peru), Sudestada (Uruguay) and Armando.info (Venezuela).



partirse de manera exigua por todo el territorio nacional; la situación más crítica está en la cuenca Lerma-Santiago-Pacífico donde dos inspectoras deben supervisar a los casi 40 mil usuarios que explotan el agua.

O.C. = Organismo de Cuenca  
D. L. = Dirección Local



## Mexico's poor water surveillance in rivers

In October we published this environmental investigation on the lack of supervision of wastewater discharges in the Santiago river, one of the most polluted in the country.

The [investigation](#), carried out by independent journalists in Jalisco with the help of Quinto Elemento Lab, revealed the deficiencies in the monitoring of toxic substances that are discharged into the country's basins and generated a database based on dozens of information requests submitted to local and federal authorities.

The investigation was illustrated with photographs and [videos taken with a drone](#), and it managed to demonstrate the falling number of inspectors and revealed a decrease in inspection visits, as well as fines and sanctions against an increasing number of companies, local governments and organizations that use the Santiago's river water but do not treat it properly.

This investigation was one of the projects selected by a jury in the Quinto Elemento Lab annual call in search of investigative projects.



Con voto de PRI avanza reforma del Ejército

El dictamen para ampliar hasta 2028 la presencia militar en las calles se discute hoy en el pleno del Senado

**VÍCTOR GAMBOA**  
victor.gamboa@quintoelemento.com.mx  
Cada vez que hablamos de la reforma del Ejército, PRI y Verde, así como el de la reforma de la Guardia Nacional, siempre en comisiones del Senado la minuta modificada para permitir el despliegue de las Fuerzas Armadas en labores de seguridad pública hasta 2028.

**VALERIA MOY**

## Sedena planea esquivar la ley para tener su aerolínea

**HACKEO** A SEDENA

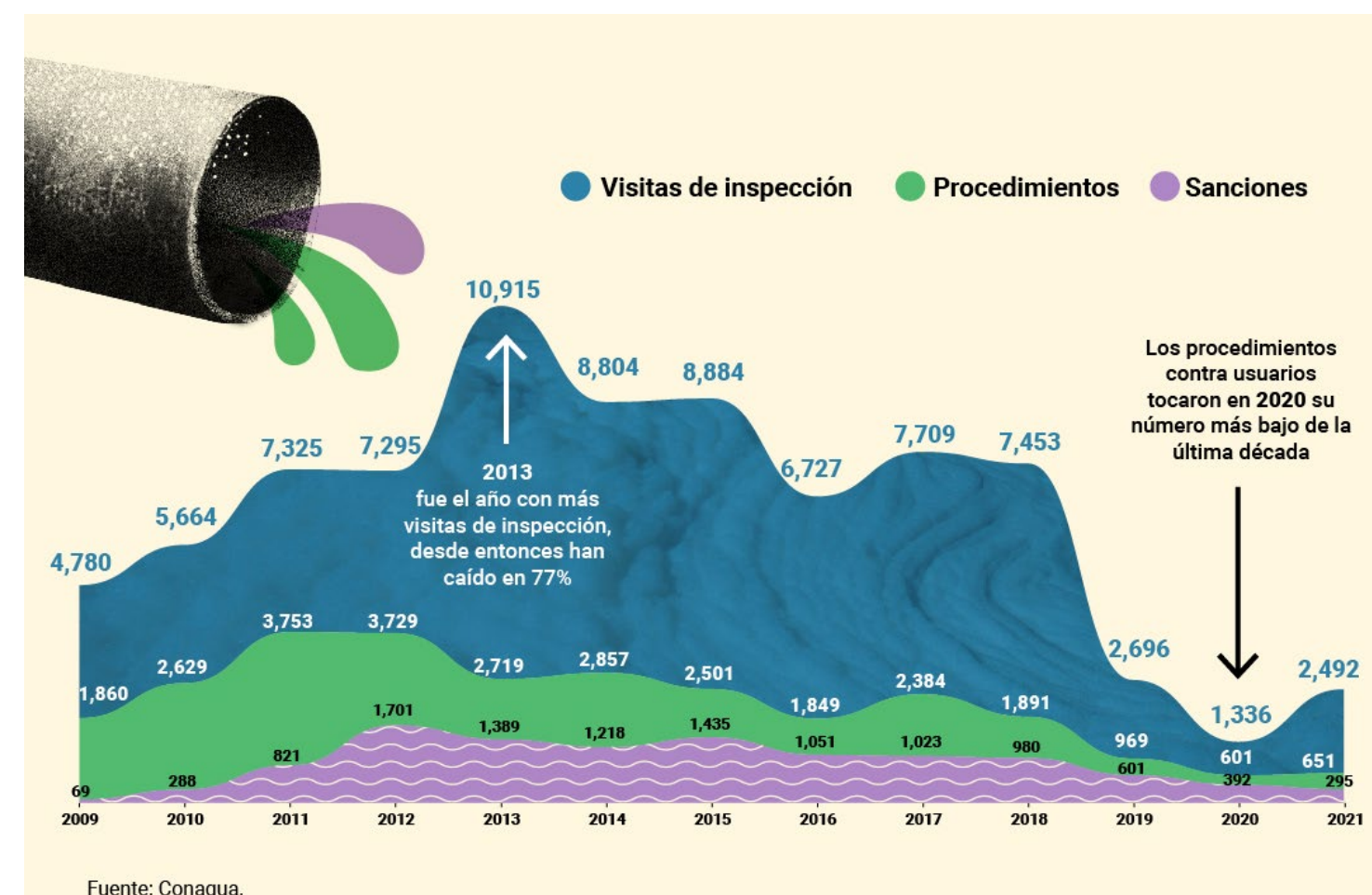
De acuerdo con la filtración del grupo de hackers Guacamaya, la dependencia busca además crear una empresa turística

**MIRIAM RAMÍREZ**  
mariam.ramirez@quintoelemento.com.mx  
La Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Sedena) contempla la creación de una nueva aerolínea de transporte de pasajeros y de carga con una flota de 10 aviones de transporte militar.

**ADÍÓS AL POETA DAVID HUERTA**

La información se obtuvo tras una filtración en más de 10 millones de correos electrónicos de la Sedena que fueron otorgados a EL UNIVERSAL por el grupo Guacamaya, que hackeó a la dependencia.

**ARROPAN A CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM**  
Gobernadores de Morena, pero también del PRI, PAN y de Movimiento Ciudadano, e integrantes del gabinete presidencial y de la Ciudad de México arroparon a la jefa de Gobierno, Claudia Sheinbaum, en el entramado que dio por su cuarto año de gestión. AFI, con-  
venció a los asistentes a que "juntos y juntas sigamos haciendo historia". AFI



# The illegal handling of 49,000 DNA profiles from missing persons

[This investigation](#) revealed that since 2016, Mexican authorities such as the Attorney General's Office, the National Security Commission, the Federal Police and prosecutors from various states, illegally handed over to a private company the genetic profiles of thousands of disappeared people in Mexico.

When the story was published in January 2022, there was an ongoing investigation surrounding the theft of the genetic database, and almost six months after it was published, the former head of the National Search Commission [was sentenced](#) to three years of jail for trafficking with the DNA of missing persons.

The investigation, one of the projects selected in the Quinto Elemento Lab public call, also discovered that the database with more than 49 thousand records was taken to Spain without the consent of Mexican authorities and family members.



Así fue la entrega ilegal de da  
desapareci

Por **LUCÍA FLORES Y GERMÁN CANSECO**



**#AristeguiEnVivo** | Estamos con los periodistas  
Germán Canseco (@germancanseco) y Lucía Flores (  
@lu\_fm)

♦ Trafico de datos genéticos de 49 mil personas  
desaparecidas  
bit.ly/33tJset



8:38 a. m. · 17 ene. 2022 · Hootsuite Inc.





# NEW NARRATIVES AND TOOLS

In addition to producing and publishing investigative projects, a large part of our efforts focuses on providing journalists in Mexico with tools so they can do their job in a safer, more innovative and high-quality way. Throughout the year we provided and participated in various workshops and seminars, like **MásterLAB**, the only program in the Spanish-speaking world that trains editors as leaders in journalistic investigations.

## MásterLAB, second generation

Twenty-one editors from all over Mexico, some of them from the most difficult and risky regions to practice journalism, were selected to join the second generation of MásterLAB, the only program in the Spanish-speaking world that trains editors in how to lead investigative projects.

Between July and October, participants received personal mentoring and took online lessons taught by the best experts in the hemisphere on how to select, pitch, organize and edit an investigation project, as well as ethics, law and security best practices to protect sources and journalists.

At the end of the course, we held an [intensive three-day face-to-face workshop](#) with the second generation and some members from the first one. Adding the first two generations of 2021 and 2022, MásterLAB has already trained 45 editors in Mexico, half of them women. Quinto Elemento Lab is developing a support network between pairs for the exchange of better practices and collaboration in regional and national investigations.





**5ºELEMENTO**

**De una pista al reportaje de investigación**

Con: **Alejandra Xanic y Andrea Cárdenas**

Viernes 25 de marzo 2022  
18:30 - 20:00

TALLER

## Consulting sessions

As part of our fifth anniversary celebration, our team at Quinto Elemento Lab offered personalized consulting sessions to journalists who had an ongoing investigation.

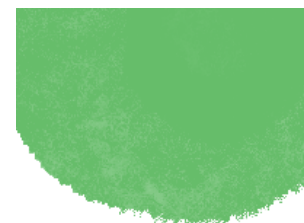
During three days in March, we offered talks and [individual advice](#) to 28 journalists who reached out to solve problems and move forward with their investigations.



## Virtual workshops

Also to celebrate our first five years, we organized a series of seven weekly workshops open to students and journalists, on topics such as interview techniques, strategies to declassify information and resources for disseminating research findings.

The workshops took place [between March and May](#), and 566 people, including journalists, students and the general public, registered to participate in these courses.





## Journalism of the possible

In partnership with Redes por la Diversidad, Equidad y Sustentabilidad, Ojo de Agua and La Sandía Digital, we launched in June a [call in search of narrative projects](#) in radio and podcast formats directed to indigenous and rural communities across Mexico.

“Journalism of the possible, stories from the territories” is a project to provide tools which improve the narrative and production capacity of community communicators and promote that the stories become known and reach a broader audience.

During the second semester of 2022 and the first half of 2023, the program organized workshops, seminars and bootcamps to train participants in the creation and production of community radio narratives.

## Narrative and investigative journalism workshop

As part of the [“Guadalajara, World Book Capital”](#) initiative sponsored by UNESCO, Quinto Elemento Lab was invited to give a narrative and investigative journalism workshop for journalists in the capital of Jalisco.

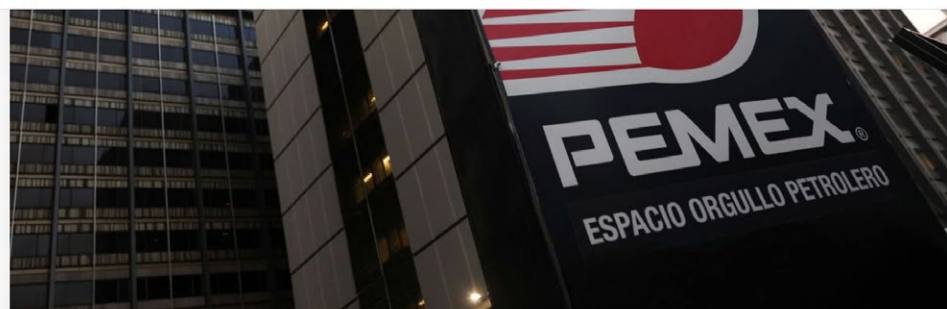
The 10-month course consisted in a series of in person and online Saturday classes, where participants were able to learn investigative techniques and new narratives to build their journalistic stories.



# THE FIGHT FOR TRANSPARENCY

As journalists, we know that transparency and accountability can be the antidote against corruption and abuse of power. This is why we make the most of the Transparency Law, exercising the right to information and training other journalists so they may use it in their favor with greater skills and efficiency. Sometimes, when authorities refuse to make their actions transparent, we also stand up and fight to open those “black boxes” and reveal what they meant to keep hidden.





MEXICO CITY, July 15 (Reuters) - Mexico's state oil company Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex) disclosed the names of two former managers that allegedly received bribes from the world's largest independent commodity trader, Vitol, newspaper Reforma reported on Friday, citing independent journalism organization Quinto Elemento Lab.

Citing a document obtained through the Mexican transparency institute, Quinto Elemento named the two former general managers of contracting for Pemex Procurement International in Houston as Carlos Espinosa Barba and Gonzalo Guzman Manzanilla.

## Pemex identifies bribed officials

Since late 2020, when executives of the Swiss oil company Vitol confessed that they had bribed officials from Mexico and other Latin American countries to retain businesses, we began a battle to find out who was involved.

For a year and a half, Pemex refused to disclose the identity of those allegedly engaged. Finally, and after a legal battle, in July 2022 [we were able to learn the names](#) of two Pemex's managers based in Houston who supposedly participated in the corruption scheme.

Quinto Elemento Lab published the scoop in Reforma newspaper, and the international news agency Reuters picked it up to distribute it on a global scale.

Fiscalía desclasifica tomos del expediente Odebrecht... sin cobrar 1.7 millones de pesos [ow.ly/sgSy50HAC6R](https://ow.ly/sgSy50HAC6R)



## Prosecutor's Office declassifies the Odebrecht files

For months we worked to be given access to the files which make up the case file the Mexican Attorney General's Office opened against former Pemex CEO, Emilio Lozoya, accused of receiving bribes from Brazilian construction company Odebrecht.

At first, the Prosecutor's Office refused, and later said they were willing to hand them over if Quinto Elemento Lab paid 1.7 million pesos (about one hundred thousand dollars) for the material. We fought before the National Institute for Transparency (INAI, for its acronym in Spanish) for the Prosecutor's Office to disclose the documents without demanding such a disproportionate charge; the Institute [ruled that the case was so relevant](#) the Prosecutor's Office had to publish the material free of charge, so anyone can review it.



## Following Ancira's money

Mexican steel tycoon Alonso Ancira reached in 2021 an agreement with the federal government to get out of prison by returning 216.6 million dollars, following the irregular sale of a fertilizer plant to the Mexican government. For months we looked into the details of the deal reached with the owner of Altos Hornos de México, and the amounts Ancira had to pay in order to fulfill his promise. And although the term for the first payment of 50 million had already expired, [no one in the government knew where the money was](#) —or they weren't willing to tell.

The day we published this story on the frontpage of El Universal newspaper, president Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Pemex had Ancira's money, even though he did not present any evidence on the status or destination of the money.



# ***WHERE DO THE DISAPPEARED GO***

From our award-winning division dedicated to the coverage of the human rights crisis, we continue to build a network of journalists around Mexico which investigates the disappearances, the failures that hinder the search of missing persons, and the causes that keep these crimes in impunity. Mexico reached in 2022 the official figure of 100 thousand missing persons.

## Meetings and training

The second meeting of journalists who cover disappearances took place in November, in Mexico's central Gulf zone. Colleagues from the states of Tamaulipas, Puebla, Veracruz, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosi attended this bootcamp.

For three days a group of 50 people including journalists, security experts, historical memory experts and mothers seeking for their loved missing ones, met to share experiences on the coverage of disappearances and to build tools to do a more ethical, robust and safe work.

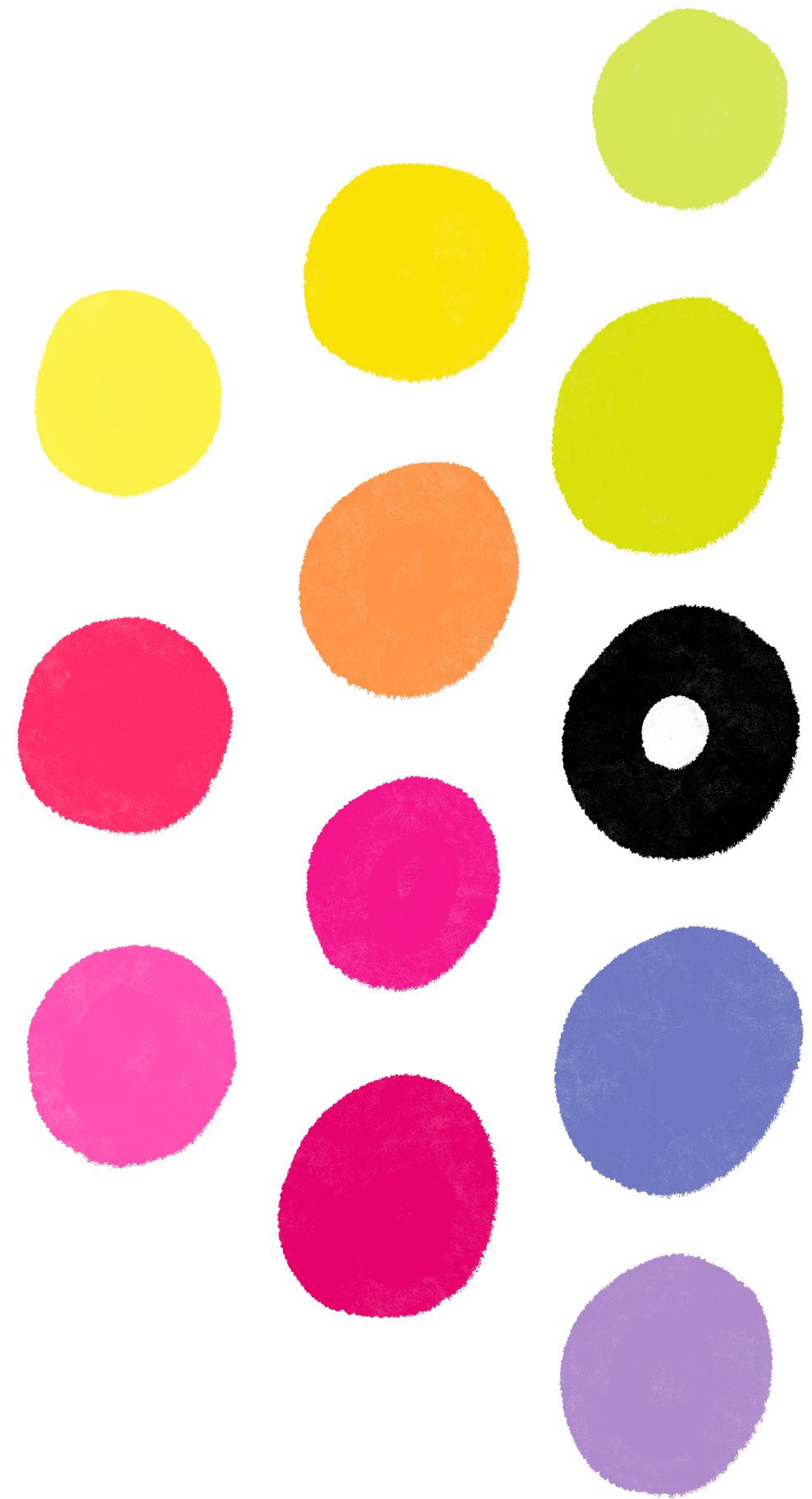
In February, 44 journalists from Mexico and Colombia completed the "Journalism and Disappearance Memories" course, organized in partnership by "Where do the disappeared go", Quinto Elemento Lab and the organization Hacemos Memoria at the University of Antioquia.





# AWARDS AND HONOURS

During 2022 our staff, our organization and some of the collective projects in which we participated were honored with various awards.





## **Fragments, nominated for the Gabo Award 2022**

For its use of interactive data which show how Mexico reached 100 thousand disappearances and what the epicenters of the tragedy have been, the Gabo Foundation chose “Fragments of the disappearance” as one of the [10 best journalistic coverages](#) in Ibero America.



## **Fragments, recognized by GIJN**

For its use of narrative, data and multimedia tools, the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN) recognized “Fragments of Disappearance” as one of the [eight best journalistic investigations](#) in Latin America of 2022.



## **Juan Villoro donates his Gabo award to QEL**

Mexican journalist and writer Juan Villoro, who in October obtained the Gabo Prize 2022 Award for Excellence, [announced he decided to donate](#) the prize money to Quinto Elemento Lab, in support of journalists who work in silenced and highly dangerous areas.



## **National Journalism Award**

Our collaborator Marcos Hernández Nucamendi won the [National Journalism Award](#) for an [interview with Tita Radilla](#) published in “Where do the Disappeared go”. Radilla has spent more than 30 years looking for her father Rosendo, a disappearance victim during the Mexican ‘dirty war’.



## Canada Human Rights Award

In November, the Canadian embassy in Mexico awarded Quinto Elemento Lab the [Human Rights award](#) for our organization’s contribution in promoting freedom of expression in Mexico.



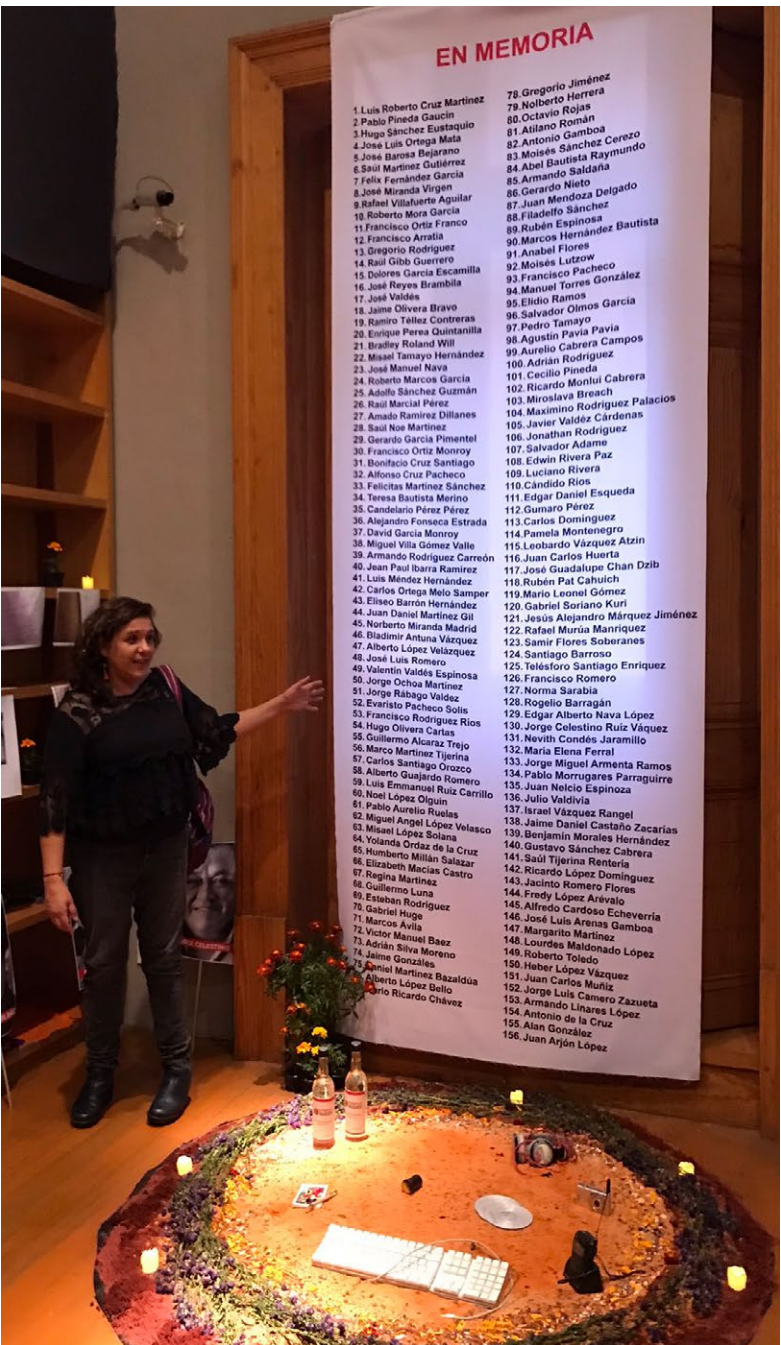
## Pandora Papers, SIP Award

The Interamerican Press Society (SIP, for its acronym in Spanish) awarded the 2022 [In-depth Journalism award](#) to the International Investigative Journalists Consortium and 40 associated media outlets in Latin America –among them Quinto Elemento Lab– for the Pandora Papers publication of the previous year, a transnational investigation on tax havens.



## Altar of the dead for murdered journalists

To remember and demand justice for journalists who have been murdered, Quinto Elemento Lab participated in an exhibition of [altars for unjustified deaths in Mexico](#), organized by the Porrúa Bookstore where the names, pictures and memories of 156 dead journalists in the last two decades were displayed. 2022 was the deadliest year for the press in Mexico with 12 murders according to Article 19.





# ALLIANCES AND PARTNERS

More than 60 media outlets in Mexico and abroad republished our stories, picked up our investigations or invited our journalists to comment on the findings.



## Media outlets that published Quinto Elemento Lab's work

### National

Animal Político  
Aristegui Noticias  
AVC Noticias  
Chiapas Paralelo  
El Economista  
El Financiero  
El Universal  
La Nota Zacatecas  
Noroeste  
Pie de Página  
POPLab  
Proceso  
Reforma  
Revista Espejo  
The Observer  
Semanario ZETA  
ZonaDocs

### International

Armando.info (*Venezuela*)  
Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación Periodística (*Colombia*)  
El Universo (*Ecuador*)  
IDL-Reporteros (*Peru*)  
Metrópolis (*Brazil*)  
La Nación (*Argentina*)  
La Prensa (*Panama*)  
Sudestada (*Uruguay*)





**Media that quoted the findings  
of Quinto Elemento Lab’s stories**

- Actualidad RT
- Alto Nivel
- Canal del Congreso
- CNN
- Confirmado *(Venezuela)*
- El Heraldó
- El Tiempo *(Colombia)*
- Expansión
- Infobae
- La Opinión *(USA)*
- La Silla Rota *(Colombia)*
- Meganoticias
- MSN
- Nuevo Mundo *(Guatemala)*
- Publimetro
- Reportes Nicas *(Nicaragua)*
- Reuters
- Ruido en la Red
- SDP Noticias
- Sopitas
- Telemundo *(USA)*
- Televisa N+
- The Committee to Protect Journalists *(USA)*
- The Washington Post *(USA)*
- Univision *(USA)*
- UNO TV
- Yahoo News



**Radio and TV stations  
that invited our journalists**

- El Finaciero Bloomberg
- El Heraldó Radio y TV
- Grupo Fórmula
- Instituto Mexicano de la Radio
- MVS Noticias
- NTR Radio
- Radio Centro
- Radio Ibero
- UDG TV Canal 44



# DONATIONS AND FINANCING

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Ford Foundation

Open Society Foundations

Tides Foundation

The Reva & David Logan Foundation

Brot für die Welt

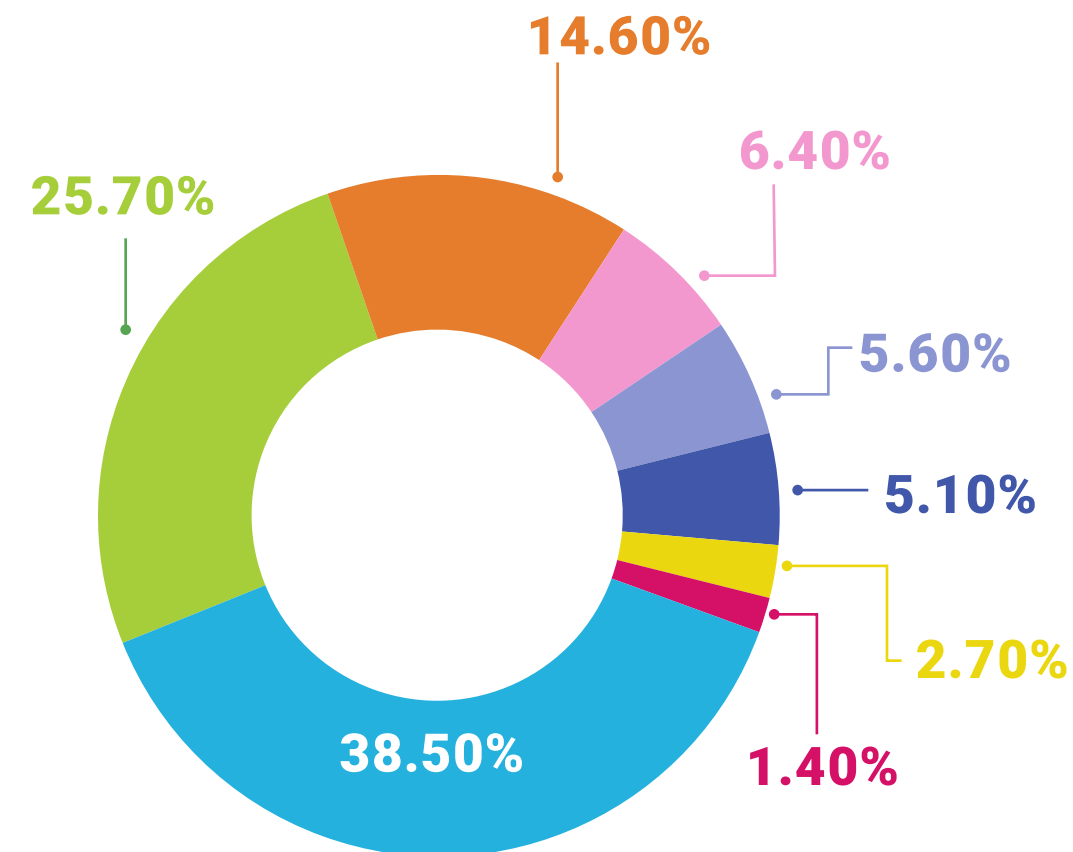
Heinrich-Böll Stiftung

The GroundTruth Project / Report for the World

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

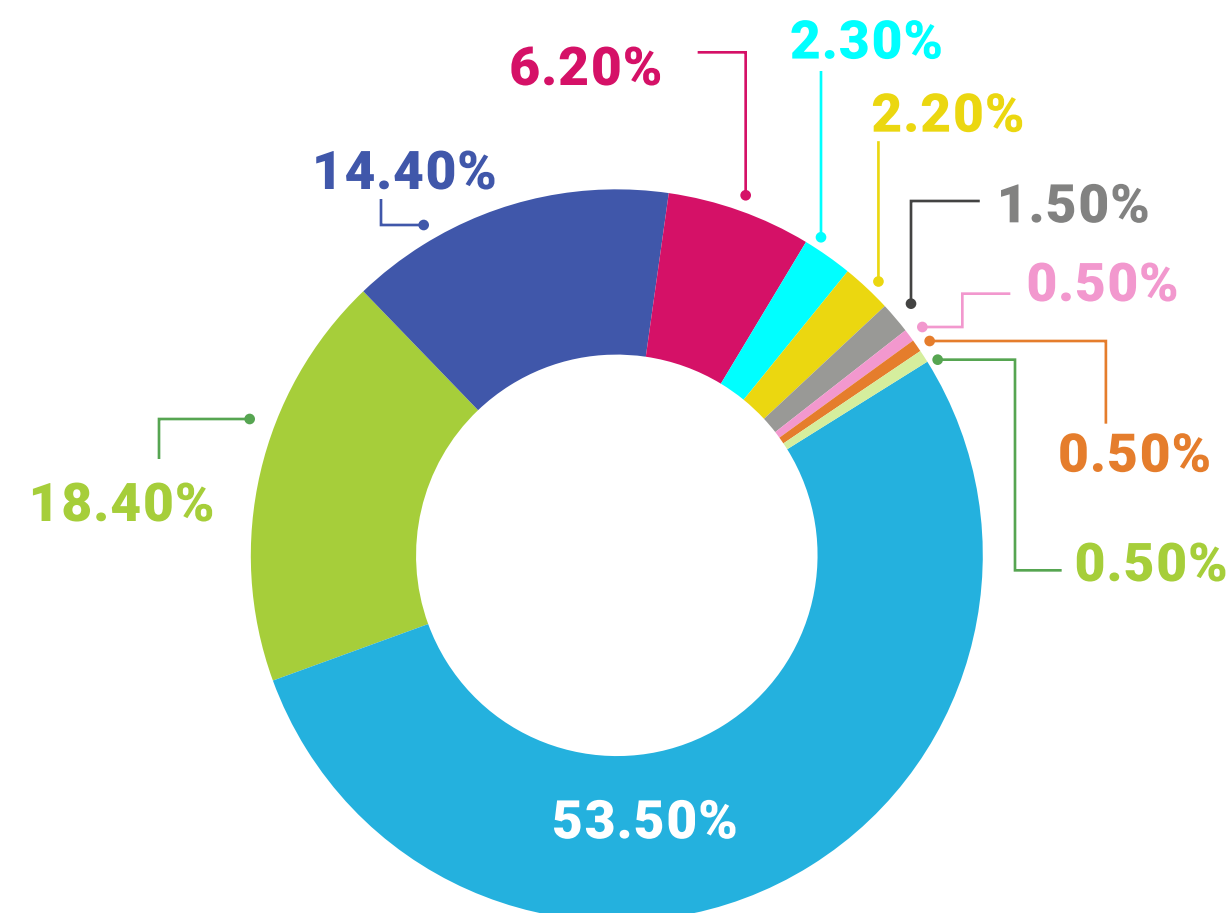
National Endowment for Democracy

The Fund for Global Human Rights



## INCOME 2022

- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Open Society Foundations
- Tides Foundation
- Others
- Brot für die Welt
- Self-generated
- Heinrich-Böll Stiftung



## EXPENSES 2022

- Salaries
- Journalist fees
- Training
- Production
- Office
- Accounting and audits
- Web host and platforms
- Cybersecurity
- Computer equipment
- Legal services

# OUR TEAM

Quinto Elemento Lab has a compact work team and draws on the talent and knowledge of a wide network of journalists and people with other skills and abilities.



**Armando Talamantes**  
Executive Director



**Alejandra Xanic**  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Co-founder



**Marcela Turati**  
Project coordinator,  
Co-founder



**Ignacio Rodríguez Reyna**  
Editor, Co-founder



**Diana Partida Arteaga**  
Administrator



**Andrea Cárdenas**  
Investigative reporter



**Violeta Santiago**  
Investigative reporter



**Efraín Tzuc**  
Research analyst



**Alan Sánchez**  
Coder and webmaster



**Kathy Corcoran**  
MásterLAB  
Co-coordinator

**Natalia Mandujano**  
**Jorge Salcedo**  
**Rashid Kalife**  
**Azul Serrano**  
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