



# Informational Guide





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## INDEX

Introduction	05
Who is behind Casa La Serena?	06
What is Feminist Holistic Protection (FHP)?	07
What is our political approach to self-care, collective care and healing?	09
The IM-Defensoras Healing and Respite Homes	13
What is Casa La Serena and how does it work in Mexico?	14
What is our support model?	15
How do we organize the self-care, collective care and healing stays at Casa La Serena?	17
Who can you contact if you have questions or comments?	25
Appendix	26



## INTRODUCTION

Casa La Serena is our political proposal for rest, care and collective healing for women defenders, activists in Mesoamerica and other feminist allies in the Global South.

It is a space that allows us to analyze and shift how our work as human rights defenders within contexts of systemic and patriarchal violence impacts our lives, organizations and movements. Casa La Serena is a feminist response that reclaims and ignites our rights to wellbeing and joy, to sow resilience and constructive resistance, and to sustain ourselves through reclaiming personal powers and reasserting our immense collective power.

Casa La Serena opened its doors in 2016 and is the result of years long collaboration between IM-Defensoras and Consorcio Oaxaca that centers care through a feminist, trans-inclusive, intersectional approach, respecting all forms of life that accompany human life on this planet and that seeks to build new ways of relating to ourselves and to others.

In this Informational Guide you will find information that can help you understand where our shared dream, Casa La Serena, comes from, what its objectives are and how we carry out our work. Throughout our first ten years we have learned, among other things, to humbly share our experience, and we aim to do just that through this guide.

***Welcome to the heart of Casa La Serena!***



## WHO IS BEHIND CASA LA SERENA?

- **The Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras)**, a political network of women defenders, organizations, networks and multiple social movements in El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua.
- **Consortio Oaxaca**, a feminist civil organization that advocates for the rights of women, youth, and children at the state, national and international levels. One of our principles is to center care. We are one of the founding organizations of IM-Defensoras.

By recognizing our diversity, we generate strategies of Feminist Holistic Protection (FHP) to collectively empower and sustain our struggles for human rights in Mesoamerica, as well as our security, wellbeing, leadership and autonomy.

IM-Defensoras and Consortio Oaxaca share another foundational principle- collaborative networks among women save their lives. Therefore, we promote creating spaces, discussions and networks of women in the different places where we work.

If you want to know more about us, please visit the links below:



<https://im-defensoras.org/>



<https://consorciooaxaca.org/>



## WHAT IS FEMINIST HOLISTIC PROTECTION (FHP)?<sup>1</sup>

Casa La Serena is part of the Feminist Holistic Protection (FHP) Model of IM-Defensoras. The FHP is the political pact we made as during our 2010 conference in Oaxaca as organizations and women human rights defenders from different countries in Mesoamerica.



Illustration by: Consuelo Mora B.

1. Taken from IM-Defensoras, El Pacto de cuidarnos, pp. 96-96: <https://im-defensoras.org/public/z2qq6cjak692xmmx2ti3kg42fwho/IMD-PactoDeCuidarnos-Diciembre2022.pdf>

It is a vision and a practice based on four main pillars:

**1. Care at the core.** The first pillar is to center care. Care is a right, a vital necessity and a basic principle in the world we seek to create. We know that no one survives without the daily support of those who feed us, hold us, and heal us, or without the vital elements that sustain us including water, food and forests. Collective care allows our struggles for justice to continue and for our lives not to be extinguished by violence.

**2. Defiance.** The second pillar involves recognizing that women defenders are diverse and defiant. We are political actors present in all social movements, and we have our own needs and our own ways of understanding protection.

**3. Intersectional feminist view of violence and risk.** The third pillar is our risk assessment. We question the capitalist, racist and patriarchal system that harms our bodies and territories, and from that perspective, we analyze risk. The feminist perspective is a key tool to render visible the discrimination, violence and repression women defenders, our organizations, movements and struggles face and to understand that all these socio-political violences are intrinsically patriarchal. We use a notion of expanded risk to recognize the specific violences that impact us personally but also in our families, organizations and communities. We take into consideration all the intersectional oppressions that affect us, as well as the territorial context in which we reside. An intersectional feminist perspective recognizes that gender discrimination, traversed by different structures of oppression, limits the recognition of risk - as society teaches us to normalize violence -, restricting the power to make decisions about our safety and reducing the possibilities of having support networks.







**4. Interconnectedness.** The fourth pillar is summarized in the phrase: “Networks save! We understand protection not as an individual matter, but as a process and a collective skill that allows us to take care of ourselves together, in community, in our territories and through our own knowledge, recognizing and honoring women defenders’ experiences, analysis and ideas about their own protection.

## WHAT IS OUR POLITICAL APPROACH TO SELF-CARE, COLLECTIVE CARE AND HEALING?

To speak of self-care, collective care and healing is to make an ethical commitment and a political stance, with the following defining principles from our perspective:

**1. The personal is political.** This motto encourages us to reflect on the importance of seeing ourselves as political actors who practice for ourselves what we wish for other people. In this sense with self-care as a guide, we analyze our own ways of being and reflect about how we conduct our activism and human rights defense: Are the workloads we have are those we would wish for the people we support? Do we interact with our comrades in the struggle in a way that reflects behavior that we believe would foster social transformation? In other words through these reflections and analysis, we attempt to materialize this discourse to support others in our daily lives.

**2. What is the point of revolution if we can't dance?**<sup>2</sup> The phrase that gives the title to one of the books that inspired the development of the self-care strategy in the IM-Defensoras is attributed to the anarchist Emma Goldman, who, when scooped by one of her comrades for dancing in an “inappropriate” way, said: “If you can't dance, your revolution doesn't interest me<sup>3</sup>”. With this phrase we vindicate the right of women defenders to joy, to pleasure, to the enjoyment of their own bodies and to strengthen creativity and meaningful human bonds in the movements in which they participate.

**3. Human rights defense and activist spaces are not idyllic.** It is important to know cultures of machismo, patriarchy, exploitation and/or self-exploitation often permeate our workplaces as well. It is necessary to constantly interrogate and deconstruct what we have learned throughout our lives and, while in our discourse we aim for the opposite, what is being constantly reproduced. Therefore, it is important not to idealize or demonize our organizations and/or movements but to constantly reflect on them often in order to make them into the spaces we imagine they can be.

Personal check-ins, reflections and growth are also fundamental.<sup>4</sup> Byung-Chul Han, in his book *Psychopolitics* speaks of this current characteristic of the capitalist system, of not needing an external oppressor, since we have built a tyrant within ourselves that demands more and more of ourselves. This effective way of functioning of neo-liberal capital makes it difficult to fight against it, since



2. Jane Barry and Jelena Đjordjevic, “What’s the Point of Revolution if We Can’t Dance,” Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights, 2007, retrieved November 17, 2017, <https://urgentactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/06/WTPR-in-Spanish1.pdf>.

3. Manuel Morales, “La Mujer que Estados Unidos Odiaba.” *El País*, January 21, 2015, retrieved November 17, 2017, <http://blogs.elpais.com/historias/2015/01/la-mujer-que-estados-unidos-odiaba.html>

4. Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics. Neoliberalism and New Techniques of Power* (Barcelona: Herder Editorial, 2014): 1-128.

the oppressor or the oppressive situation to change becomes blurry. Therefore, questioning the patriarchal or capitalistic tendencies within ourselves, such as “to exist for others” or “to work a little more, always more”, is fundamental within the perspective of self-care.



**4. Human rights advocacy or activism is not a sacrifice.** Due to the violent contexts in which we live, it is common to think that it is very important to “go the extra mile” in activism, as this could change the course of things. However, through this principle we invite you to reflect on whether what we really have to do cannot wait to eat, sleep, rest, have fun for a while. It is important to mention that productivity does not equal creativity or effectiveness. On many occasions, in our push to do more, we end up physically and mentally exhausted, which limits our capacity to act and respond.

**5. Well-being is not a privilege, but a right.** For many activists and defenders, thinking about a moment of rest is a privilege in the face of the contexts they confront. That is why we invite you to reflect on how necessary it is to disconnect, unwind, renew and strengthen yourselves. Through the framework of Feminist Holistic Protection (FHP), where we emphasize self-care, collective care and healing for women human rights defenders, we have reflected on experiences when fellow defenders have not been able to perceive various security threats or have been more exposed to more risk than necessary due to their level of fatigue and exhaustion. Additionally, it is common that we are constantly stressed and, at times, frustrated by the tensions we face or saddened by the cases we support within our work. These moods shift the affective dynamics and relationships within our organizations and create conflicts with the people close to us more generally. It is important to ensure that the work we do fosters social transformation but not at the expense of our ability to coexist with one another.

**6. Neither money nor time is a constraint.** On many occasions, when we discuss self-care with activists and human rights defenders, they might believe that self-care requires spending a considerable amount of money. On the contrary, it is worth mentioning that we place emphasis on restoring the value of local knowledge, contact with nature, moments of reflection, breathing exercises, appropriation of the body and enjoyment, and more. Often these practices require more of one's disposition and willingness rather than with economic resources. However, this does not strip organizations and/or foundations of their responsibility to allocate funds for joint reflections and actions on this topic within each human rights defense space.

**7. Each person and collective knows what they need.** In the area of self-care, standardizing care practices or anticipating what will help another person feel their best is not possible. It is necessary to discuss these things, and each person, organization, collective should identify what support they require based on an honest appraisal of their needs. Achieving this is not easy, as human rights defenders we are very accustomed analyzing and reflecting; however, staying in the cognitive realm and leaving the body and the meaningful encounter behind leaves us disconnected from ourselves and other people.

**8. Self-care is personal and collective.** It is important that our organizations -when they exist- can lay the foundations for reflection on self-care and collective care and generate internal agreements and policies that help to create and sustain a culture of care including: respecting work days and schedules, establishing compensation time, rest periods, creating mechanisms for conflict resolution, etc. This principle is key to strengthening the relationship between self-care in daily life and in group dynamics, both of which are necessary to empower the move-





ments in which women defenders carry out their work, while also inspiring models of healthy and joyful activism.

**9. Healing is a living process and repairs life:** Recovering the healing knowledge of our peoples in Mesoamerica, cultivating spirituality, connection and rootedness with life and nature are transformative acts in the face of predatory models of violence. Seeking the healing practices that best suit personal and collective daily life is part of repairing the damage caused by this structural and patriarchal violence. We do not need to be at the tipping point of exhaustion or illness to do something, rather we need to “empty and wash the vessel” so that the energy moves towards transforming pain into strength.



## THE IM-DEFENSORAS HEALING AND RESPITE HOMES

*The IMD has a network of **healing and respite homes** that prioritize the care and safety of women defenders. Casa La Serena is part of this network.*

“Since the founding of IM-Defensoras, we have been aware of the need for shelter and respite spaces for women defenders. We have toured different feminist shelters for women victims of violence. We learned about different experiences emerging from feminist solidarity during the armed conflicts in the region, as well as temporary relocation programs for women defenders, and we consulted with women defenders throughout the region. Based on the lessons we learned, we decided to create spaces of refuge with the following characteristics:

- Spaces with different levels of security that would allow us to receive diverse women defenders in times of risk, but also in times of burnout, exhaustion or when experiencing the deep impacts of violence.
- They should be in places that are geographically and culturally close, that do not imply a very strong uprooting from their places of origin, without having to travel long distances and where they can find elements of their gastronomy, of their culture.”<sup>5</sup>




## WHAT IS CASA LA SERENA AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

After several years of reflecting on self-care, of constantly re-affirming its importance and of seeing the changes when one embodies this approach, in August 2016 the IM-Defensoras and Consorcio Oaxaca created Casa La Serena, a space for temporary stays for women who belong to one of the national networks of women human rights defenders created in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico. **The objective** of these stays is **to foster to the recovery, healing, rest and reflection of women human rights defenders who are going through situations of extreme fatigue, emotional or physical exhaustion, personal crises, grief, loss or other impacts stemming contexts of violence and patriarchal culture, which hinder and obstruct their defense work.**

*Casa La Serena is a space that offers defenders therapeutic activities, healing, integral care, recreation and rest when they consider it necessary. These these stays foster introspection, reflection, evaluation and the transformation of their*

5. Taken from IM-Defensoras, El pacto de cuidarnos, pp. 77




*personal and group dynamics with the intention of reconnecting with what fosters their life force, activism, belonging, connection with their bodies and their interpersonal bonds.*

## WHAT IS OUR SUPPORT MODEL?

Based on the idea that we are full, complex beings, we take into consideration five facets of support:

**Physical Element:** This includes paying attention to our body and increasing the connection with what we feel, with any signs of illness, taking care of our vital organs, listening to our symptoms, and trying to meet their needs. Physical support includes food, sleep, rest, medical care and various healing therapies, among others.

**Emotional Element:** Paying attention to our feelings and emotions, being able to express these emotions so that anger, pain and sadness do not build up, is part of the care that women defenders need. Emotions and feelings are a powerful tool for our protection. We need to learn exercises to manage and release emotions when we feel desperate, anxious, sad and angry. This prevents emotions from lingering in the body and shifting into illnesses.



**Energetic Element:** As advocates we work in very difficult circumstances and this often creates blockages in our body and the energy around us. For example, we may feel “bad vibes”, “death energy”, or “suspicious for no apparent reason”, etc. Healing and clearing energy blockages allows us to improve our hopeful outlook and the environments we work in, ultimately lightening the burdens we carry.

**Mental Element:** Patriarchal violence also damages our mind, that is, what we think. As women defenders we often experience recurring thoughts that torment us and prevent us from resting, including ideas that harm our most basic wellbeing, such as: "No matter how hard I work, it is not enough", "nothing will change", "as a woman I am not worth it". Over time this causes burnout, suffering and damage that we need to become aware of in order to and recover our power and worth little by little.

**Spiritual Element:** We recognize the benefit of all practices, symbols and rituals that women defenders engage in to feel connected to life, to nature, to the greatness of a transformative collective power. Our native peoples have a great spiritual richness that we can recover to strengthen our wellbeing and inspire our movements for justice.





## HOW DO WE ORGANIZE THE SELF-CARE, COLLECTIVE CARE AND HEALING STAYS AT CASA LA SERENA?

### Criteria for participation

The evaluation for participation in Casa La Serena stays includes the following criteria:

- a) Identify as a human rights defender and be endorsed as such by an organization, network, collective or other women defenders.
- b) Be experiencing situations of extreme fatigue, exhaustion, personal and/or family crises, unresolved grief or loss, damage stemming from past assaults or other circumstances that puts their advocacy work at risk.
- c) Not currently under imminent threat to their physical safety or living in seriously risky circumstances.
- d) Be willing to participate for the entire duration of the stay.
- e) Acknowledge that no partners or companions may be brought along during the group stay.
- f) To avoid risks in the gestation process stemming from physical, energetic and spiritual intensity of the activities during the stay, we do not recommend the stay for pregnant people.
- g) Synthetic drugs and alcohol may not be consumed during the stay.
- h) Stays are not recommended for persons with aggravated health conditions (physical, psycho-emotional or mental) that prevent or limit their participation in program activities.
- i) If you currently use any medication, you must ensure that you arrive with enough to last for the duration of your stay.

## 1. Exploratory interview

Before coming to the stay, the Casa La Serena team will conduct an exploratory interview to find out what skills, strengths and/or needs you have within each of the five elements of our care model (Appendix 1).

## 2. Crafting the Activity Program for Your Stay

Based on the Casa La Serena team's analysis of the exploratory interviews, the team selects the activities, therapies and/or workshops that can strengthen the care practices of participating defenders. The Team identifies commonalities among the participants and takes note of any special attention that may be needed during the stay.

*We never repeat the same activity program because the needs of each advocate and each group are different. We invite you to review our Appendix 2, in which you will be able to learn about some of the activities, therapies, and other programming offered during our stays.*





## Sample Program:

Self-diagnosis, Diagnosis and Crisis			Raising awareness, widening the map, and becoming conscious				Reclaiming strengths, highlighting priorities, and developing a self-care plan			
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	
Breakfast										
WELCOME RITUAL AND ENERGETIC CLEANSING	INDIVIDUAL THERAPIES -Neuromuscular Massage -Psychological Therapy -Bioenergetic diagnosis	QI GONG GROUP WORKSHOP PSYCHOTHERAPY I	PAINTING WORKSHOP	QI GONG  CLAY WORKSHOP	OUT-TING	WORKSHOP: MOTHERHOOD  WORKSHOP: CREATIVE WRITING	QI GONG  WORKSHOP: PHOTOEMBROIDERY  LUDIC WORKSHOP	REVIEW OF SELF-CARE PLANS	ALTARS  CLOSING AND DELIVERY OF EVALUATION	
LUNCH										
BODY MAPPING	Reading of the Tonalpo hualli	GROUP WORKSHOP PSYCHOTHERAPY II	TEMAZCAL	MID-STAY MEETING	OUT-TING	PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC EXERCISES WORKSHOP	WORKSHOP: PLANT BASED SOAP MAKING	DANCE WORKSHOP	OUTTING	

In addition to crafting the program based on the exploratory interviews, it is worth mentioning that the food menu is also defined during this process, as we consider the allergies, illnesses and/or particular needs of each fellow defender.

Want to check out our Recipe Book?



<https://consorciooaxaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Recetario-Casa-la-Serena.pdf>

### 3. The Stay

As you can see in the sample program above, the stay includes different activities, such as:

*Healthy practices and healing therapies.* Individual psychotherapy and therapeutic group workshops; neuromuscular or relaxing massages; herbal baths; bioenergetic diagnosis; yoga; Qi Gong (Chi Kung); movement practices that include a reflection on their importance; dance; energetic cleanses and temazcal.

*Coexistence and reflection.* Creating a body map for self-diagnosis and evaluation; talk about nutrition; cooking workshop; playful workshop; natural soap and salve making workshops; outings; sharing motivational and self-care tools; crafting self-care measures, collective care and healing plans.

*Creative workshops.* Clay, dance, painting, embroidering photographs, writing, collage.







*We have a network of more than 30 therapists, healers, art-ivists, and collaborating partners who work to develop and carry out the program activities that foster the development and strengthening of the abilities, skills, and possibilities for each of the human rights defenders who come to Casa La Serena.*

*We have taken care to share what it means to be a women human rights defender with this network, specifically what the Feminist Holistic Protection approach consists of, as well as to sharing risk/context analysis and physical and digital security measures to guarantee their safety and that of the women human rights defenders.*

*In addition, we make space for evaluation and feedback regarding the stays.*

These activities are spread throughout the ten days of the stays, in three main phases:

**1. Self-diagnosis, diagnosis and crisis.** Generally, this phase unfolds over the course of the first days, and with the support of the Casa La Serena team and the help of the therapists, defenders start to recognize some of the effects, ailments, and other sensations they may be experiencing. It is also the time when the participants settle in the house and feel the first benefits of the shift in care practices: healthy diet, being served in the dining room, time for rest, taking care of any personal needs, among others.



*Welcome activities: The stay begins with a permission seeking cleansing ritual, asking the energies that everything addressed during the stay will benefit each participant. Afterwards, we hold a welcome session so that the defenders can get to know each*

*other and share why they are at Casa La Serena. We share what self-care, collective care and healing mean to us and share the activity program, as well as a document with the agreements established by Casa La Serena for their safety and harmony among fellow participants. At the same time, we create space to discuss what defenders need from their fellow participants and the team to feel good during their stay.*

**2. Raising awareness,** widening the map, and becoming conscious. Without a doubt throughout the entire stay, the defenders “become aware” of practices, emotions and thoughts that they need to transform, but methodologically, during this phase we emphasize becoming aware of their capacities, abilities and potential to achieve what they have set out to do. The question that guides this phase of the stay is: What do I need to do, say or develop to be better to myself and to those around me?

At this point in the process, the defenders recognize themselves as deserving of attention, affection and care. They identify what has positively allowed them to be who they are, and we reaffirm their strength and their right to healing and well-being as they move towards the transformation of certain practices, habits and/or attachments.

***At this stage we hold a Mid-Stay Meeting:*** *It takes place at the halfway point, when we evaluate how the WHRDs are feeling, what they have noticed or realized, and what they would like to see happen in the remaining time. This phase encourages the WHRDs to broaden their vision of the strengths they possess and not just the negative impacts they have identified.*





**3. Reclaiming strengths, highlighting priorities, and developing a self-care plan.** In this phase the defenders begin to clarify what concrete actions they need to take to feel better, and they include these steps in their self-care plan. With the help of Casa La Serena's support team, they are able to evaluate their resources and limitations in order to set goals that are attainable according to their unique circumstances. This is a key decision-making moment in defining care priorities.

***Self-care plan:***

*For us, it is extremely important that the defenders leave Casa La Serena with a Self-Care Plan, since this guarantees that the stay will translate into concrete changes that take into consideration each person's unique the context and the tangible possibilities. To facilitate this goal, we created a series of questions that help identify effective self-care practices and map out how to achieve them.*

**STAY:**

**SELF-CARE PLAN WORKSHEET**

Name:

Age:

Place of residence:

**For each need that you identified across the five facets of support, select the ones that you can commit to yourself in the short and medium term. Write down how you are going to address each need.**

Needs to be addressed	What steps will you take to address these needs?	What external support do you need to address your needs?	Start date and time frame for completing the action.

What ideas, skills, and practices will you share with others upon your return, and with whom will you share?

Who can you partner with to foster self-care and collective care? How can you support one another?

In what ways can you advance self-care, collective care and healing practices within your organization?

**Evaluation:** *On the last day of the stay, each defender receives an evaluation form so that they can share what they gained from the stay, how it helped them, and what the process meant to them personally. The form includes space for open comments on each activity carried out during the stay so that the team members can also be evaluated. This feedback has allowed us to improve the support we provide over the years.*

#### 4. Follow-up

At the end of the stay at Casa La Serena, we will send an activity report to the organizations or networks that requested space for the participating WHRDs. We are confident it's these very organizations and networks that will motivate, support and help guide the WHRDs so that they can carry out the activities established in their Self-Care Plan.

On our side, we invite the defenders who find it appropriate to a shared messaging channel where we share different care tools to strengthen and diversify their practices. In addition, we hold an annual meeting with the WHRDs who have stayed at Casa La Serena to learn about what they have since accomplished and the challenges they face implementing their care practices.





## WHO CAN YOU REACH OUT TO IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

*Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca*

Address: Pensamientos No. 104, col. Reforma

Office phone: 13 28 996

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Project Manager Casa La Serena Mexico

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General Coordinator Casa La Serena-Mexico

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# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX 1. EXPLORATORY INTERVIEW FORM

### CONFIDENTIAL DATA

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ***I. Demographic info of the Human Rights Defender requesting attention.***

FULL NAME AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR OFFICIAL IDENTIFICATION:		
Place of birth:	Current place of residence:	No. of children: Age:
Date of birth:	Marital status:	Gender Identity:
Age:	Do you belong to an indigenous community? Which one?	Do you speak any indigenous languages? Which one?
Occupation:	Current organization and role:	
Your phone number:		
Telephone number in signal (messaging app):		
E-mail:		
If you are not a Mexican citizen, please provide your passport number:		
Emergency contact name, number, and relationship:		

#### ***II. Defender's risk analysis and reported incidents (Context, role, risks faced in the last year)***

Any recent (last 12 months) significant security incidents
Have you or your organization conducted a recent risk analysis? Briefly note the most relevant
If there have been attacks on the organization, briefly describe them
Do you have a panic button, and if so, for what reasons?
Actual time spent working and/or advocacy each day

### III. Overall assessment

- Physical Element

Do you have any of the following illnesses; if so, since when, and what are your current treatments?

Condition	Yes or no	If so, since when?	Do you currently use any medications or other treatments? If so, Please specify
Diabetes			
Hypertension			
Arthritis			
Allergies		To what? And since when?	
Psoriasis			
Colitis			
Gastritis			
Fatty liver			
Acid Reflux			
Muscle pain			
Bone pain			
Other chronic conditions? Which ones? Please specify in the boxes below.			

\*Share if your diet is: Vegetarian    Vegan    Omnivorous

\*Do you consider your diet to be healthy and balanced?

Please check off what meals you eat each day	Yes	No	Please list the foods you eat most often
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Dinner			
Snacks (consumption between meals) if you do it			
Foods that you should not consume due to medical prescription, care or allergies.			

- Emotional element

Do you currently experience any recurring or persistent emotions? (sadness, fear, worry, impotence, loneliness, anger, etc.)?

\*Can you identify the root or cause of any of these emotions?

\*What emotional care practices do you engage in, and how often?

\*Do you find that you are demanding of yourself? How does this show up?

\*How many hours do you sleep a day? Do you wake up feeling rested and energized; that is, is your rest truly restorative?

\*Do you often enjoy, without guilt or regret, social/leisure/recreational time and spaces with your partner/family/friends? How often?

\*Is it easy for you to ask for help when you need it? How do you feel when you receive help?



- Mental element

\*Have you been diagnosed with any of the following conditions; if so, when were you diagnosed, and what is your treatment?

Condition	Yes / No	Since when?	Are you currently receiving treatment? If so, please specify what treatments.
Anxiety			
Depression			
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)			
Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)			
Bipolar disorder			
Schizophrenia			
Other (Please specify)			

- Energetic element

\*Do you sometimes feel tired, anxious, or stressed without clearly recognizing the cause?

\*Do you engage in any practices that recharge your energy? If so, please specify what and how often you engage in this practice.

- Spiritual element

\*How do you relate to the spiritual, to mother earth, energy, nature, divinity or divinities, or any other concept that for you is transcendental in life?

\*We would like to know if you have heard anything about Casa La Serena, what you expect from the stay and what commitments you can make.

*Thank you for your collaboration!*

## APPENDIX 2. THERAPIES AND ACTIVITIES

**1. Energetic Cleansing.** Traditional permission seeking Limpia cleansing ritual practiced across various cultures in Mesoamerica, directed to the four cardinal points during which the energy of a space or person is cleansed and balanced.

**2. Soul Cards.** Participants are presented with the choice of two Soul cards that illustrate who they were in childhood-youth and who they are now. It allows fellow defenders to get to know each other on a more intimate level.

**3. Body Mapping.** At the beginning of each stay, we facilitate a space to bring awareness to the body and recognize what pain and strengths it holds through body mapping.

**4. Neuromuscular Massage.** This therapy seeks to release pain, emotions and toxins trapped in the body through deep manipulation.

**5. Bioenergetic Diagnosis.** The bioenergetic examination is a technique that allows you to find out what the ailments the body has and what it needs. If the cause is a pathogen, traditional and natural medicine is used; if the cause is an emotional, Bach Flowers, craniosacral massage, among others, are recommended.

**6. Biomagnetic diagnosis.** Psycho-emotional biomagnetism is a variant of medical biomagnetism that integrates the emotional and psychological element of therapy with magnets. It is based on the idea that unresolved emotions can generate energetic blockages that affect physical and mental health.

**7. Group Psychotherapy.** Brief intervention from a systemic approach and focused on specific issues that the advocates themselves develop during the group sessions.

**8. Individual Psychotherapy.** A private therapeutic space that facilitates a closure of the group psychological processes, as well as to point out the pending areas to work on after returning to their own countries.

**9. Reflexology.** It is a therapeutic technique based on the stimulation of points on the feet, called reflex zones, which produce specific effects on other organs of the body.

**10. Traditional Zapotec Temazcal.** It is a pre-Hispanic ritual that seeks the liberation of the physical, energetic and emotional body through sweating, the properties of medicinal herbs and ancestral wisdom.

**11. Reading of the Tonalpohualli.** The Tonalpohualli is a code of the Mixtec people. Through its reading you will learn more about yourself and how your energy can be of greater benefit to the people around you.

**12. Workshop: Embroidering photographs.** This introspective, creative workshop consists of embroidering over a self-portrait style printed photo, with the intention of encouraging self-recognition and honoring ourselves. The photograph chosen for this activity, the colors of the threads, the figures created with each stitch, form a personal weaving endowed with intimate and symbolic meanings. In this way, embroidering on the photograph creates a visual and tactile experience, encouraging concentration, self-discovery and healing through creation.

**13. Painting Workshop.** This is a practical workshop in which we will explore our bodies and memories through painting, identifying what needs, possibilities, skills, tools and practices we hold.

**14. Clay Workshop.** This workshop invites us to reconnect with ourselves and the earth through clay, eliminating the masks that hide the each of our own essences.

**15. Qi Gong.** An ancient Chinese discipline that shifts energy through postures and movements, with the intention of unblocking life force energy and restoring health.

**16. Restorative Yoga.** This form of Yoga combines deep breathing and movements that seek to heal chronic pain, as well as finding the balance between mind and body through breathing.

**17. Bioenergetic exercises.** These exercises are accessible and simple to perform anywhere. They help to heal pain, reduce anxiety, provide support to people in crisis and offer other energetic-emotional tools.

**18. Antigym.** It is a discipline that allows you to restore wellness and energy with simple and effective movements, always listening to your own body.

**19. Discovering our Goddesses.** Based on the book with the same title. The strengths and challenges of the corresponding Goddess are identified.

**20. Biodanza.** This workshop fosters the reconnection with the body, feeling, affection and life, and along with it: joy, strength, assertiveness and freedom.

**21. Engraving Workshop.** The objective of this workshop is to recognize art as an act of healing and a space for self-knowledge and self-expression.

**22. Uterine Healing and Connecting with The Moon Woman.** The goal of this workshop is to recognize the uterus as an energetic center and its relationship with the different moon phases, facilitating self-knowledge through the use of the obsidian egg, vaginal steaming, ovarian breathing, among other methods.

**23. Creative Writing Workshop.** This workshop explores autobiographical writing, uncovering micro-stories of dignity, rage and hope that stem from activism, especially the lived experience of self-awareness and healing in Casa La Serena.

**24. Medicinal Soap Making Workshop.** Allows you to elaborate your own artisanal, medicinal soaps, with herbs that support well-being in your daily life.

**25. Play Workshop.** This space seeks to reflect on the relationship of joy, amusement, and fun of women through playful, recreational and fun activities.

**26. Dance Workshop.** Parting from the understanding that our body carries memories of our lived experiences within our cells, influencing the ways in which we learn to relate and present ourselves, this exploration through somatic movement and joy through dance invites us to weave new desirable ways of relating to our own body.

**27. Gratitude Altar.** In this exercise conducted at the end of the stay, each defender creates an altar for herself, with the intention giving thanks and taking a moment to recognize the processes and learning that took place during the stay.

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Casa La Serena is a collectively constructed space for care, healing, and rest for human rights defenders, and you are a part of the creation process.

