



## THE COUNTRY IS AT WAR

Greetings to all of our prayer warriors. This letter is a bit different in the sense that we have been unable to communicate for some time due to many circumstances beyond our control. First, as of about a month and a half ago, the hard drive in my laptop gave out. Thankfully, I am connected to the cloud so nearly all of my files were backed up. I was able to purchase a hard drive from the U.S. but what normally takes about a week to arrive took nearly a month. I installed the hard drive and had nearly all my files in place only for the hard drive to begin locking up. After several days of research, I discovered that the new operating system was very unstable and thus was the culprit for my computer locking up. I reformatted the drive again, backdated the operating system and here we are today. I apologize for the slow communication, it has been a situation beyond our control.

The other major problem we have faced is the current political/social situation in Venezuela. I am not sure how much news is making it's way to the United States, but we are living literally through a civil war. We have lived through things as a family during the last few weeks that we have never lived before in our lives. Today is calm, but for over 50 days we have dealt with the continuous flow of tear gas into our urbanization as the youth in Venezuela are engaged in a war with the government. The armaments of the youth have been fireworks and rocks while that of the government has been far more oppressive. This rebellion began on somewhat of a local level close to our house, but has grown into a national outcry and has been going on for over 50 days. There have been over 60 documented deaths nationwide as well as many more hurt and many more taken prisoners. Often times this battle has been just outside the gate of our neighborhood. So far this has been the longest standing opposition to the government for years. There was somewhat of a revolt back in 2014, but according to those with whom we have spoken with, it did not last nearly as long as this has. We have listened many nights to explosions just blocks away that lasted through the night. There have been several civilian young men who have died standing in opposition to the government. If you are on our email prayer list, I will accompany many photos downloaded from social media to show the level of danger that we are currently facing on a daily basis. We as a family have contingency plans in place as well as wonderful neighbors who are very aware of our situation and status and who are constantly helping us know what to do and when not to leave. One of the major forms of protest has been blocking the streets. Just a few meters from our house another neighborhood has literally placed several trees one on top of the other to block the street. One evening while returning from cleaning the church we came to a stoplight, all of a sudden about 20 men came running out and yelling. They put pieces of tire in the road, poured gasoline on them and lit them on fire. We were the third car back and obviously this surprised us. They then began throwing molotov cocktails at the cars in front which really scared us. Thankfully, I was able to jump the curb and get away quickly on the other side of the street. Currently, Venezuela is in a very dangerous state. We are very careful about leaving the house and typically stay within a few blocks of our house.

Despite all of this, the church continues to grow. People continue to arrive looking for reality in a world that is upside down. We continue to share Jesus with them in hopes that they will surrender their lives to him. We have had several talks with our kids regarding where they can play and why. The kids have not been able to return to school through all of this because the danger is simply too high. Please join with us in prayer that Venezuela will soon see an end to the fighting. We are in continued contact with our mission director and home church. If you would like to know more you are welcome to contact John Yingling at BIO and he can furnish more up to the minute statuses for us. We have decided that it would be very risky to try to leave at this point because many roads are blocked. We also believe with confidence that God has us here during this time with a purpose. Please Pray!!!

### **Please Prayerfully Remember:**

- Resident Visas - We Are **STILL** in the waiting process
- That the violence would soon end.
- Pray for our kids during this time of instability of the country
- Daily Protection! **VERY VERY DANGEROUS SITUATION!!!!**

*The Sykes*