

Dearest Renee.

I should have to write telegraphically due to the present circumstances.

The Country: There is a Genocide going on here. 29 or 30 people dead since April the 19th. All of them have been shot by the National Guard either with bullets or with tear gas cans aimed directly to the protesters bodies during the demonstrations at street level or by the National Guard when surveillance have been carried out from helicopters. i.e: tear gas been shot from the air to the heads of the demonstrators. There are around 200 people wounded and more than a thousand taken in to prison plus many who have been forcibly disappeared.

At night the National Guard, the Police and the paramilitaries, these last ones are some sort of militia or mercenaries paid and aided with weapons by the Government, raid seemingly at random some very populated suburbs in order to shoot tear gas right through the windows of the apartments and flats of very crowded building blocks as well as some hospitals. They do this to blame that part of the population who resist the regime, which is actually the majority of the country inhabitants for all the casualties that may result from these attacks.

The People: Long and large queues to find food, medicines, bread etc. There are lots of old people, families and children on their own wandering in the street begging for food or searching among the rubbish for some left overs. Many faint. High levels of helplessness. Sad faces and tears. Most of the people are very thin, they have lost weight. Hunger and illness in the following order; in the first place starvation and in the second place diseases and maladies of all kinds. Lots of violence, crimes, thefts and fear.

The Family: Many families have been taken apart due to massive migrations, especially the young ones who leave for good in search of new opportunities. Husbands leaving their wives and children behind. Wives leaving their husband behind with their children. The overall quality of life is reduced to a daily hunt for food and medicines in order to survive.

The Media: Most of the newspapers, television channels and radio broadcasting have been monopolized by the Government. Therefore we don't have access to real information unless one has an Internet connexion at home or by smart phones with access to Twitter, Facebook or some specialized News web pages or social media. Otherwise the only thing you can see in the official media is propaganda, soap operas, and entertaining trivial shows. Sorry I didn't mention that we have the slowest and defective Internet in all Latin America.

The Arts and cultural scene: Those of us who are openly opposed and against the Government are banished from the scene. Therefore we are more and more limited in our field of actions; being this: exhibiting, selling or having any kind of backing. Some theatrical shows have been shut down by the authorities because they are critical to the system. But on the other hand and ironically, some Grand Orchestras dedicated to classical music are allowed and supported with great amounts of money from the government. For us the independent, free thinking visual artists, painters or sculptors or mixed media artists, every day is more difficult and very expensive to find paints,

paper, brushes, canvas, plaster, cement, or any other sort of basic stuff required for the nature of our artwork be it industrial matter like PVC, iron, Perspex, anything. For the writers and poets the situation is even more difficult because to have a book printed or a simple leaflet is a little less than impossible due to the astronomically high prices charged by such a printing task.

Our Family: We are striving every day. Taking my little Sara to school everyday I can, because due to the continuous demonstrations some days of the week the school closes down. It's very stressing. Samantha keeps teaching the kids at the cultural centre she has been working at for some years. I keep working at my art, doing what I can with whatever resources I have as well as working with the children at a private school and doing some extra assorted jobs whenever the occasion emerges. I went to the Doctor some days ago because I wasn't feeling well and she diagnosed a circulatory blood troubles, a very high level of anxiety as well as some uneven heart rates which I should have to put some medical treatments as soon as I get the results of certain exams she ask me to have them done. I think this heart unease I'm undergoing is due to this every day long-term stress we are all going through. Not to mention all the tear gas I have breathed every time I get caught in between demonstrations.

Some weeks ago I went to the coast to sort out the family that I left at the house over there to take care of it. I still have to solve some legal issues with them so as to make clear that they are going to be the keepers and do the maintenance of the house for a certain length of time and having the right to live in it in exchange without a rent payment since they are very very poor people who can hardly manage to eat every day.

As for my friends Nury and Emil they went to Canada to explore some possibility of a new life. Since he is an Aviator and she is a Biologist they just might find a new horizon. I think they may have to work first and for some time in different kinds of jobs since they would probably have to validate their qualifications to be able to work in their own fields.

Well my dear Renee, I thought this was going to be a short telegraphic letter but as you can see I couldn't abbreviate much. I'm sorry for that, but you are one of the few friends I can write to and tell the details of the life we are living here at the present time in the history of this Country. I beg you excuse me for such a long letter.

I also want to thank you and Eric for all the efforts you are doing to help us. I don't want to cause any nuisance with our circumstances.

I send all my family love and gratitude from our hearts to you, Eric, Cornelia and Saskia. xxx.

Yours eternally grateful.

J.Luis. B.