



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 16, 2016

## Thanks to Socialism, Venezuelan Parents Giving Up Children They Can't Feed

Poverty in Venezuela is becoming so severe that parents are increasingly “handing children over to the state, charities or friends and family,” reports [Reuters](#).

The nation with the world’s largest oil reserves also has at present the world’s highest inflation rate, a shrinking economy, rising joblessness, [food shortages](#), [forced Christmas sales](#), and [currency crackdowns](#).

For those fortunate enough to have a job, wages average “less than the equivalent of \$50 a month at black market rates,” writes Reuters. (Forget the country’s [four official exchange rates](#), none of which even remotely reflects the bolivar’s real value.) Prices, meanwhile, are skyrocketing, putting necessities such as food and clothing beyond the reach of the growing number of poor. Given the choice between seeing their children starve to death — or, perhaps worse, get involved in unsavory activities just to eat — and turning them over to others who may be able to feed them, many parents are, with heavy hearts, opting for the latter.

Hunger is a widespread problem in Venezuela, affecting millions. Two-thirds of 1,099 households with children in Caracas told children’s rights organization Cecodap they didn’t have enough to eat, according to a survey released by the group last week.

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According to Reuters:

The Caracas municipality of Sucre, which encompasses Petare, one of the region’s largest and poorest slums, has seen an “exponential” increase in parents needing help, say officials.

“The parents come in crying,” said Sucre welfare director Angeyeimar Gil.

“It’s very dramatic to see parents’ pain when saying they can no longer look after their child,” she said. “We’re seeing a lot of cases of malnutrition and children that come to hospital with scabies.”

Some parents are simply abandoning their children. Infants and toddlers have been found in bags and cardboard boxes. Recently, two mothers checked out of hospitals after giving birth without taking their babies.





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A social-services center in Carirubana, a municipality on a peninsula far from Caracas, sees “more than a dozen parents plead for help taking care of their children” every day, up from about one parent per day last year, says Reuters. Maria Salas, the center’s director, said, “The principal motive now is lack of food.” The government, despite its professed compassion for the poor, has been no help.

One of the parents who sought and received help from the center is Zulay Pulgar, a 43-year-old mother of two who lives with her five-year-old son, father, and husband in Punto Fijo, the capital of Carirubana. Pulgar’s family survives — just barely — on her father’s pension, worth \$6 a month at the black-market rate. She and her husband are unemployed.

“Showing photos of her family looking plumper just a year ago, Pulgar said just one chicken meal would now burn up half its monthly income,” pens Reuters. “Breakfast is often just bread and coffee, with rice alone for both lunch and dinner.”

Pulgar’s six-year-old daughter is now in the care of her neighbor, Nancy Garcia, a 54-year-old mother of five who works in a grocery store.

“My husband, my children and I teach her to behave, how to study, to dress, to talk.... She now calls me ‘mom’ and my husband ‘dad,’” Garcia said.

Despite the pain of having given up her child, Pulgar had nothing but kind words for Garcia. Her daughter, she said, had “totally changed” for the better, including her manner of speaking. Besides, she said, “It’s better that she has another family than go into prostitution, drugs or die of hunger.” Welfare workers told Reuters that there has been an increase in the number of children begging or prostituting themselves just to survive.

Pulgar hopes to be able to take her daughter back someday but told the news agency that she “does not see her situation improving.” Such is always eventually the lot of a people living under socialism. The system imposed in the name of improving their lot invariably creates nothing but misery.

Venezuelans are learning that the hard way. Others would be wise to learn from their experience rather than chase after the chimerical “workers’ paradise” themselves — and end up having to give away their own children.



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