

In the news this past week (21-28 May 2020):

### **BRAZIL, NEW COVID-19 HOTSPOT THREATENING VULNERABLE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**



Brazil has become the world's number two hotspot for COVID-19 cases as South America emerges as the new virus epicentre. The latest reports out of São Paulo show Brazil now has over 360,000 confirmed cases. Despite the steady rise in cases, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has decided to reopen parts of the economy, as some neighbouring countries are extending

lockdowns. Argentina has extended its lockdown into June, as Buenos Aires has also experienced a rapid rise in confirmed cases. Perhaps the most vulnerable populations in South America are the indigenous tribes living outside the cities. The Brazilian Amazonian Kambeba tribe — made up of just 35 families — is one example of how vulnerable the country's Amazonian tribes are. Brazil is behind most other affected countries in terms of coronavirus testing, as the government has struggled to purchase enough testing packs. This lack of testing, along with a shortage of adequate health services, makes Amazonian residents especially vulnerable. The virus is thought to have reached the most remote areas of the country by way of the Rio Negro (a large tributary of the Amazon River), which connects the Amazon to some of Brazil's hardest hit cities.

From a Christian perspective, there are an estimated 400 tribes living in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, around 77 of which are thought to be 'uncontacted.' A recently proposed law that would allow Christian missionaries to stay in contact with Amazonian tribes has caused an uproar with indigenous tribal leaders, and those that advocate for them. Many times, these Amazonian tribes are so isolated that they have little resistance to disease, and this has led to the fear that foreign missionaries will cause more harm than good by becoming part of these populations. Aside from the worry this law has caused, it does present the Church an opportunity to continue to reach Brazil's 'unreached'. However, the Church may need to adapt to the changing health circumstances and find more creative ways to bring the gospel to those in the Amazon. The law also would allow emergency supplies to be delivered to the tribes, providing the Church with a tangible way to bring aid to previously 'unreached' communities. Revelation speaks of a time when every tongue, tribe, and nation, will come to stand before the throne of God. This vision,

coupled with the Great Commission, should motivate the Church to find new and creative ways of reaching the 'unreached', including those living in the Amazon.

Pray with us for the following:

- For South American governments and leaders as they confront the ongoing COVID-19 challenge
- For wisdom in reaching the 'unreached' without jeopardising the entire community
- For indigenous believers to become the missionaries to their, and neighbouring, communities

Image:

REUTERS/Bruno Kelly