

ttff spotlights 'La Soledad'*

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A scene from La Soledad

José lies awake at night, staring into the darkness of a grim future. By day he looks heartbreakingly young to bear such a huge burden.

José is the hero of *La Soledad*, a tragic, gripping film, part documentary, partly fictionalised, and set last year in Venezuela. By zooming in on one working-class family (most of whom appear in the film as themselves), it brings alive the dry news stories about the country's economic collapse, sudden poverty, the shortage of essential goods—and the despair of those caught in this trap. Without being didactic or overtly political, it portrays the devastating human consequences of political decisions.

La Soledad, a decaying mansion in Caracas, is reached along tree-lined avenues, among other historic homes behind high, graffiti-scrawled walls. When the owners abandoned it, they let their former housekeeper Rosina stay there, and her family moves in; José, a labourer, is her grandson.

The owners still help them out with food and other essentials occasionally. But even they have been hit by the country's collapse. So rather than repairing the house, as originally planned, they decide it's past saving, and the best thing to do is to demolish it and sell the land—leaving the ailing Rosina and her family destitute if José can't find a solution.