

# *Venezuela Reopens Pedestrian Border Crossing with Colombia*

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Caracas, July 18 (RHC)-- Venezuela has reopened a pedestrian border crossing into Colombia from San Antonio del Tachira, in the western state of Tachira. It marked the second time this month that the President Nicolas Maduro administration has decided to reopen the crossing, since a group of some 500 women all dressed in white tried to break their way through a military cordon there on July 5th.

The women claimed they were "desperate" to buy basic goods that are unavailable in Venezuela, and the incident was widely reported as a reflection of the deepening economic and humanitarian crisis gripping the country.

Tachira state Governor Jose Vielma Mora has suggested the dramatic scenes have been staged by the political opposition to try to embarrass the government. Last weekend, the government reopened the border for up to 72 hours and as many as 10,000 Venezuelans from different cities passed through, Tachira state Citizen Security Secretary Ramon Cabez said Sunday.

Venezuela first temporarily closed its border with Colombia in August of 2015, after three members of the armed forces were shot and wounded while patrolling the area against smugglers. Contraband trade in fuel and basic items was on the rise, with smuggling rings buying cheap, government-subsidized gasoline and household goods in Venezuela and selling them at much higher prices in Colombia.

The foreign ministers of Venezuela and Colombia are to meet to discuss the permanent reopening of the border on August 4th.

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