

# *Venezuelan Security Forces Restore Order in San Cristobal*

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Caracas, March 31 (RHC) – A top Venezuelan military commander says the security forces have retaken control of the streets in the restive city of San Cristobal.

Many of the city's roads had been blocked by barricades erected as part of violent protests organized by opposition sectors in a bid to take down the administration of President Nicolas Maduro.

The wave of demonstrations, which started in San Cristobal almost two months ago, has since spread to the capital, Caracas, and other cities.

At least 39 people have been killed in the violence that followed.

The head of the National Armed Forces Strategic Operational Command, General Vladimir Padrino, said the police and the National Guard had "ended the curfew imposed by terrorists".

General Padrino said no one had been hurt in the operation to clear the barricades in avenues Carabobo, Ferrero Tamayo and España.

Thousands of troops cleared the structures with bulldozers and armed vehicles on Sunday, meeting little resistance in a city that had been blockaded for over a month and a half.

Jose Vielma Mora, the governor of Tachira state, where San Cristobal is located, welcomed the operation, saying that "the best present we can give to San Cristobal is the return of our children to school and of our good people to work".

The mayor of San Cristobal, Daniel Ceballos of the opposition Popular Will party, was removed from office and sentenced last week to 12 months in prison for failing to order the removal of the barricades.

Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled that Ceballos had not only failed to guarantee public order but had lent his support to groups engaging in violent activities.

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