In a note to faculty and staff Monday, June 4, Creighton University President the Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., stated his stand in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua in the wake of violence directed at peaceful, pro-democracy protestors in the Central American nation.

May 30, police and pro-government forces opened fire on peaceful protestors as they neared the end of their march at the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) de Nicaragua, the Jesuit university in the capital city of Managua. According to the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights, 11 people died and 79 were injured. During the attack, the university opened its gates, allowing thousands of protestors to take refuge from the chaos.

“Along with colleagues and leaders at Jesuit institutions worldwide, I am deeply troubled by the recent violence in Nicaragua,” Hendrickson said. “As president of Creighton University, I lend my voice to these pleas for peaceful dialogue and respect for human rights, and the immediate end to violence and intimidation. I am inspired by the courageous response to the crisis in Nicaragua by our colleagues at UCA, in providing shelter and medical assistance to those protestors under attack, and, in the face of personal threats and intimidation, continuing to push for justice.”

After the bloodshed, UCA released a statement that it “stands on the side of the people in their struggle for justice” and urged the international community to “stand in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua and to apply mechanisms which can help resolve this crisis, which has reached the level of a massacre against a defenseless population.”

On May 22, the Chair of the Bishops’ Conference of Nicaragua issued a statement informing that bishops and priests have been receiving death threats and other forms of intimidation connected to the “exercise of prophetic ministry,” which includes its denunciation of repression by the Nicaraguan government and calls for dialogue and democracy. The president of UCA, the Rev. José “Chepe” Idiáquez, S.J., also has received death threats.

Pope Francis has voiced his concern regarding these events, stating, “I am united with the bishops in asking that every form of violence end, that a pointless shedding of blood be avoided, and that open issues be resolved peacefully and with a sense of responsibility.”

The Jesuits of Canada and the United States also have denounced the violence in Nicaragua and joined the Nicaraguan bishops’ call for justice.

“Jesuit institutions worldwide play an important role as places of freedom of thought and expression,” Fr. Hendrickson said. “Let us stand in solidarity with our colleagues at UCA and offer them our prayers and support. Let us also speak out against these acts of violence in Nicaragua, and advocate and pray for a peaceful solution for the good of all the people of the country.”