June 5, 2018

Statement from Xavier President Michael J. Graham, S.J. on the Ongoing Violence in Nicaragua

As students, faculty, staff and alumni of a Jesuit university, our mission calls us to take a stand for and with all people who are working toward peace, justice and a humane and sustainable world. Threatening the life of a leader advocating for peace goes against everything we teach. Our Jesuit brother, Fr. José Alberto “Chepe” Idiaquez, S.J., Rector and President of the University of Central America (UCA) in Nicaragua, is facing such a threat. He has been very visible in calling for peaceful negotiations between anti-government protestors and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

More than a month ago, Xavier supported the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) in an expression of solidarity with UCA, calling its students to peacefully advocate for social justice. Demonstrations have now turned violent and over 100 people are now reported dead and Fr. Idiaquez’s calls for peace are resulting in death threats against him.

That is why members of the Xavier University community are directly adding our voices to those of our Nicaraguan and Jesuit colleagues. We urge the Nicaraguan government to respect the constitutional rights of its citizens to peacefully protest. The UCA of Nicaragua has an obligation to protect its students, to speak for justice, and – so far as it can – to shelter citizens who are under attack. The violent government repression of peaceful demonstrators will lead to more unrest and more deaths.

We are proud of the UCA for taking the stand it is taking and urge all parties to come to the negotiating table to work out solutions for the good of all the people of Nicaragua. May we all continue to pray for peace in Nicaragua and throughout our world.

Cordially,

Michael J. Graham, S.J.
President