June 4, 2018

Beginning in mid-April, peaceful demonstrations in Nicaragua protesting new policies put in place by its government has resulted in more than 100 deaths. In perhaps the most egregious act, 15 protestors taking part in a Mother's Day march on May 31 were killed, one reportedly by a government sharpshooter positioned along the route the demonstrators walked.

Central to supporting citizens who have been protesting is the Universidad Centroamericana UCA de Nicaragua (UCA), a fellow Jesuit institution located in the nation's capital of Managua. UCA has long been intricately involved with the country's political, societal and religious landscape, serving as an ethical and moral compass in the midst of often chaotic and authoritarian rule. The situation has eroded to the point that the safety and well being of UCA Rector Chepe Idiaquez S.J. - who has advocated for peaceful negotiations to address the current crisis - is threatened.

Along with other Jesuit institutions across the U.S. and around the globe, Le Moyne College calls for the Nicaraguan government to honor the constitutional right of its citizens to exercise freedom of expression and protest peacefully. Violent suppression of non-violent demonstrators is not only wrong but serves to undermine the legitimacy of the Nicaraguan government, which could potentially lead to the escalation of civil unrest on a much broader scale.

We are proud of the UCA for doing all it can to speak for justice, protect its students and shelter citizens who are under attack. Its mission, like that of all Jesuit institutions, is to provide students with personal and professional formation and encourage a commitment to a just, humane and environmentally sustainable world. We urge all parties to come to the negotiating table and work out a solution that will benefit all the people of Nicaragua.

Despite the horrendous actions of the government over the past several weeks, there is still time to broker a peaceful solution to this crisis. But the government must demonstrate a commitment to being part of the solution. In the words of Rolando Alvarado S.J., the Jesuit Provincial of Central America, "One who wants peace does not make war, does not inflict violence or assaults, does not persecute or mistreat or intimidate."

To help support a resolution, we join with others in publicizing this situation with our students, alumni, dioceses, elected officials and civic communities. Our prayers are with the people of Nicaragua and the leaders of its government at this critical juncture.

Sincerely,

Linda M. LeMura, Ph.D.
President, Le Moyne College