

Press release

## **Jesuit universities express their solidarity with Nicaragua in the closing session of the World Assembly of Jesuit Universities-IAJU**



The vice-rector of the Central American University in Nicaragua, Jorge Huete, was entrusted with the task of reading the manifesto.

The World Assembly of Jesuit Universities took advantage of their last day at the University of Deusto, 12 July, to express their solidarity with Nicaragua, which is currently in the throes of an increasingly severe political crisis. The International Association of Jesuit Universities-IAJU supported the manifesto drafted by the Jesuit Universities in Latin America (AUSJAL) which clearly expressed their rejection of any human rights violations or aggression against citizens. The violence in the country has resulted in the loss of 320 lives in three months.

The text particularly condemns “the recent attacks perpetrated by supporters of Nicaragua’s government against a group of Catholic priests led by Nicaragua’s Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and Bishop Silvio Báez as they helped protesters trapped inside a church”. It also denounces the attempts to silence or vilify the University of Central America (UCA) Rector, Fr. José Alberto Idiáquez, S.J., in his firm defence of the lives of Nicaragua’s students. The text supports and upholds the autonomy of higher education institutions, as well as the inviolability and immunity of university campuses which are forums for critical thinking and free expression.

The AUSJAL manifesto extends its unconditional solidarity to all the affected people and families, institutions and universities, student, faculty and administrators, as well as those who are working to protect the students' rights and security. It particularly expresses their solidarity "with our Jesuit sister institution, the University of Central America (UCA) in Nicaragua, which calls its students to peaceful advocacy for social justice, even as government violence is intended to suppress dissent".

The manifesto continues by declaring the commitment to "add our voice to those of our Nicaraguan colleagues in urging the government of Nicaragua to dismantle paramilitary groups, respect the constitutional rights of its citizens, starting with freedom of expression and peaceful protest; and in supporting the efforts of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference (CEN) in the search for a negotiated solution to the conflict". The text ends with the following point: "As the tragedy of lost lives grows in Nicaragua as well as in Venezuela, we offer our prayers for peace."

The manifesto was read by the vice-rector of the Central American University (UCA) in Nicaragua, Jorge Huete, and received with a standing ovation from the IAJU.

Video of the Latin American universities' declaration: <https://youtu.be/P25sopKE9ao>



View of one of the sessions held today.

The reading of this manifesto marked the end of several days during which some 300 rectors and academic authorities from over 200 Jesuit universities, colleges and higher education institutions have worked together on matters of key importance. Under the slogan "Transforming Our World Together", the meeting ended with reflections on some of the main challenges that Jesuit universities are facing, such as civic and political leadership, environmental and economic justice, education for the most disadvantaged groups, peace and reconciliation and inter-religious dialogue.

During the Assembly, officially inaugurated by King Felipe VI of Spain and presided by the Father General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, there have been iconic moments like the signing of the founding document for the new International Association of Jesuit Universities-IAJU Network at the Loyola Sanctuary. This association will provide the Jesuit university network with the legal status, structure and stability needed and will give impetus to universities across the world. Leading figures like Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, the political expert Pankaj Mishra and the economist Gaël Giraud SJ spoke at this event.

Some of the world's most prestigious universities such as Georgetown University, Santa Clara University, Loyola Chicago, San Francisco University, Gregorian Pontifical (Italy), Xavierian Bogotá, Iteso (México), the Catholic University of Córdoba (Argentina), Ateneo de Manila or Sofia University in Tokyo, have taken part in this third world assembly. The first two Assemblies were held in Mexico (2010) and Melbourne (2015).

The University of Deusto was chosen for this event from a select group of candidates worldwide. Hosting this event is a distinction that recognises and supports the University of Deusto and the city of Bilbao in general while setting up the Association will open a world of new possibilities for Deusto's internationalisation and networking with universities across the world.

### **Complete information on the IAJU Assembly:**

Website: <http://iaju.deusto.es/>.

Newsletter: A newsletter will be sent daily with an account of all the activities, photographs, videos and documentation created.

Subscribe to the newsletter <http://iaju.deusto.es/newsletter>

Social media sites:

Twitter (<http://twitter.com/iajunews>)

Facebook (<http://facebook.com/iajunews>)

Flickr (<http://flickr.com/iajunews>)

YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1gPBpt2ERJUAAAnTtVDD8QQ>).

Bilbao, 12 July 2018.