



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement from Richard Wood, Ph.D.**

***IACS President condemns persecution by Nicaraguan government against Catholic Church***

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 18, 2023 — Richard Wood, Ph.D., president of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC, issued the statement below:

“The seizure of the Jesuit-run Central American University by a government-controlled Nicaraguan court is a dramatic step toward totalitarianism under the oppressive regime of President Daniel Ortega and an example of growing persecution in Latin America against the Catholic Church.

The confiscation of UCA, along with its financial assets and property, comes just months after a Nicaraguan court sentenced Bishop Rolando Álvarez to 26 years in prison on charges of undermining the government.

These moves, made by a violent authoritarian government desperate to silence critics, are direct attacks on democracy and liberty, and blatant violations of basic human rights.

Catholic universities are places of free inquiry, intellectual exploration and personal discovery. Since its founding in 1960, UCA has served as a shining symbol of academic excellence and provided a high-quality education grounded in the sciences, humanities and arts. UCA has empowered generations of students from all backgrounds to achieve successful careers, uplift their families and transform their communities.

UCA — where Ortega was once was a student and three of his children have attended — is among 25 universities and colleges seized by the Nicaraguan government in the last two years. The government has imposed strict rules governing curriculum and academic programs across the country.

These unjust, illegal and amoral acts by Ortega are a betrayal of the Christian ideals he once claimed as he rose to power — and the same ideals he is exploiting to cover his authoritarianism.

As president of IACS, I condemn the seizure of UCA, call for the immediate release of Bishop Álvarez, and stand in solidarity with the Society of Jesus, members of the Catholic Church and all those fighting for truth, freedom and human rights — in Nicaragua and across the globe.”



## About the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC:

The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies (IACS) is an independent global research center located at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. IACS supports scholars and artists, produces books, hosts academic conferences and cultural events, and furthers the intellectual work of the Catholic Church. IACS was founded on September 29, 1998 by Fr. James L. Heft, S.M., professor of religion and former chancellor at the University of Dayton.

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