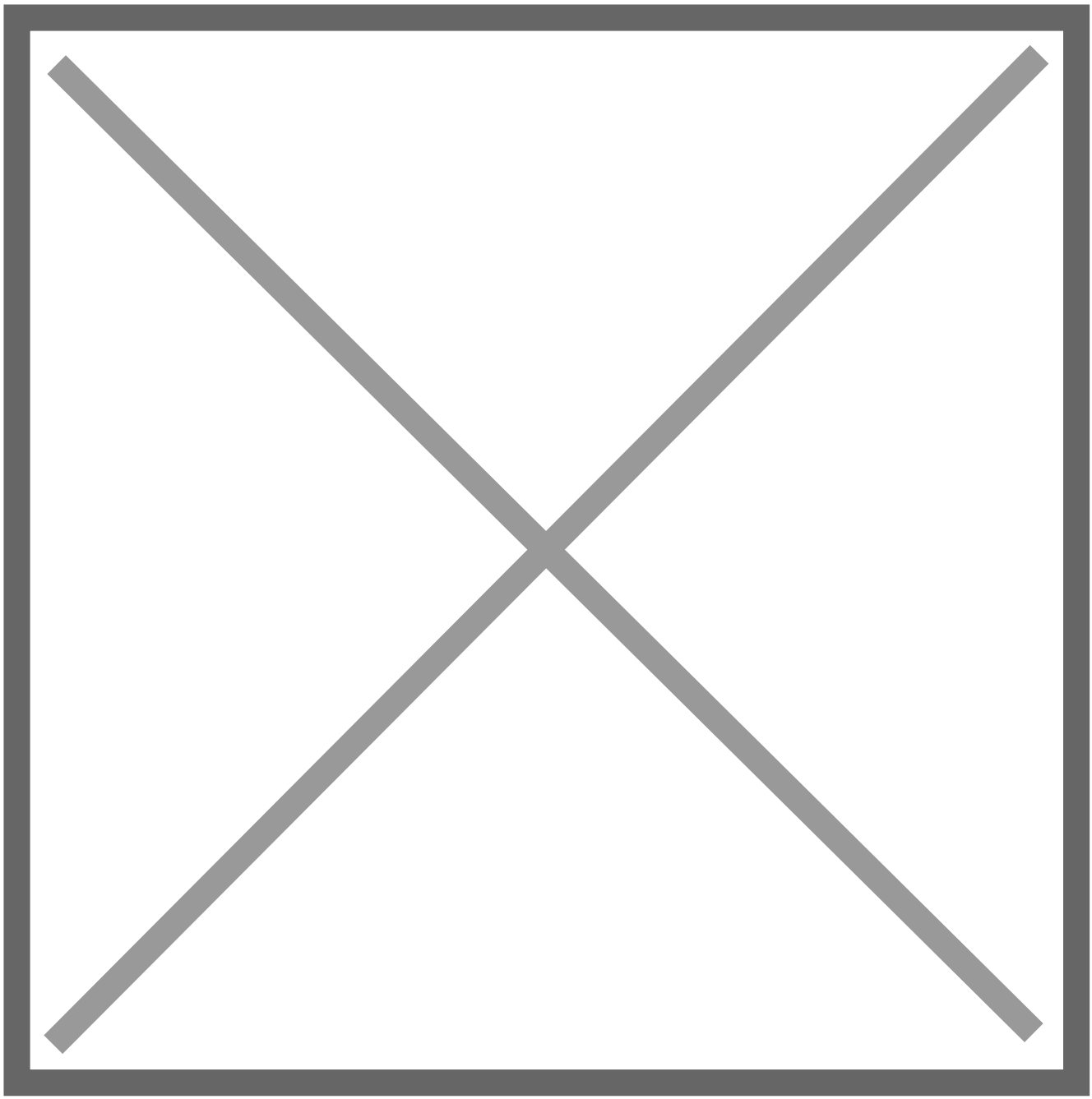
News



Damage is seen inside the chapel of a Chaldean Catholic residential complex in Ankawa, outside Irbil, Iraq, after an explosive drone strike March 4, 2026. The blast destroyed part of the chapel but caused no injuries; most residents had evacuated the Knights of Columbus–built complex days earlier due to security concerns. Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil said the attack has renewed fears among local Christians already scarred by past violence. (OSV News/Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Irbil)

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Irbil, Iraq — March 5, 2026

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The Catholic community in northern Iraq has been shaken by the attack of an explosive drone hitting the Chaldean Catholic complex in Ankawa, outside of Irbil.

"We thank God for the safety of everyone," Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil said following the assault on the vital community complex which hosts a chapel, convent, and housing for the Chaldean Church as no casualties were reported in the attack.

"We thank God that the damage is material. The chapel of this housing complex has been damaged completely," Warda told OSV News by phone from Ankawa.

"But right from the beginning when the war (with Iran) started and there were these kinds of missiles and rockets, the whole fears and wounds of the past came back again," he said.

For many Chaldeans, who were targeted and displaced by the Islamic State group a decade before, this new violence reignites painful memories for Iraq's Christian community. The area is roughly 60 to 90 miles west of the Iranian border.

"When we meet people at the daily Mass and after the Mass, everyone is not just concerned," he said, his voice full of emotion. "But you can see the fear because of

the instability. Until when? Until when?" the archbishop asked.

He recounted the hardships of the many conflicts that have confused Iraq over the recent decades and ensuing sectarian violence and displacement.

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"It's just continuing in that sense. And no matter what the Church is trying to deal with — all of these consequences of all of the violence and wars, there is always a surprise, always a new scenario, a new story to be told," the cleric told OSV News.

"Yes, we keep strong in faith and hope. We have to have that hope and we are building from that hope," Warda said. "But yes, we cannot deny this feeling that the fears, worries and concerns are there. You can feel it."

The apartment complex built by the Knights of Columbus had been largely evacuated several days earlier due to its proximity to the Irbil International Airport, the archdiocese said.

"We thank God that no injuries were reported among the residents of the complex, nor among the security forces," the March 4 statement said.

"Security personnel and civil defense teams promptly arrived at the scene to take the necessary measures and assess the extent of the damage," it continued.

The building housed workers for the archdiocese as well as providing shelter for young families displaced by brutal violence carried out by Islamic State militants in 2014 and subsequent years.

"We are now in a time once again where we pray for the solidarity and support from our brothers and sisters around the world, that these times of violence and war will come to an end, and that our suffering people may yet have a chance to return to lives of peace and dignity," Warda said.

This story appears in the **War in Iran** feature series. View the full series.