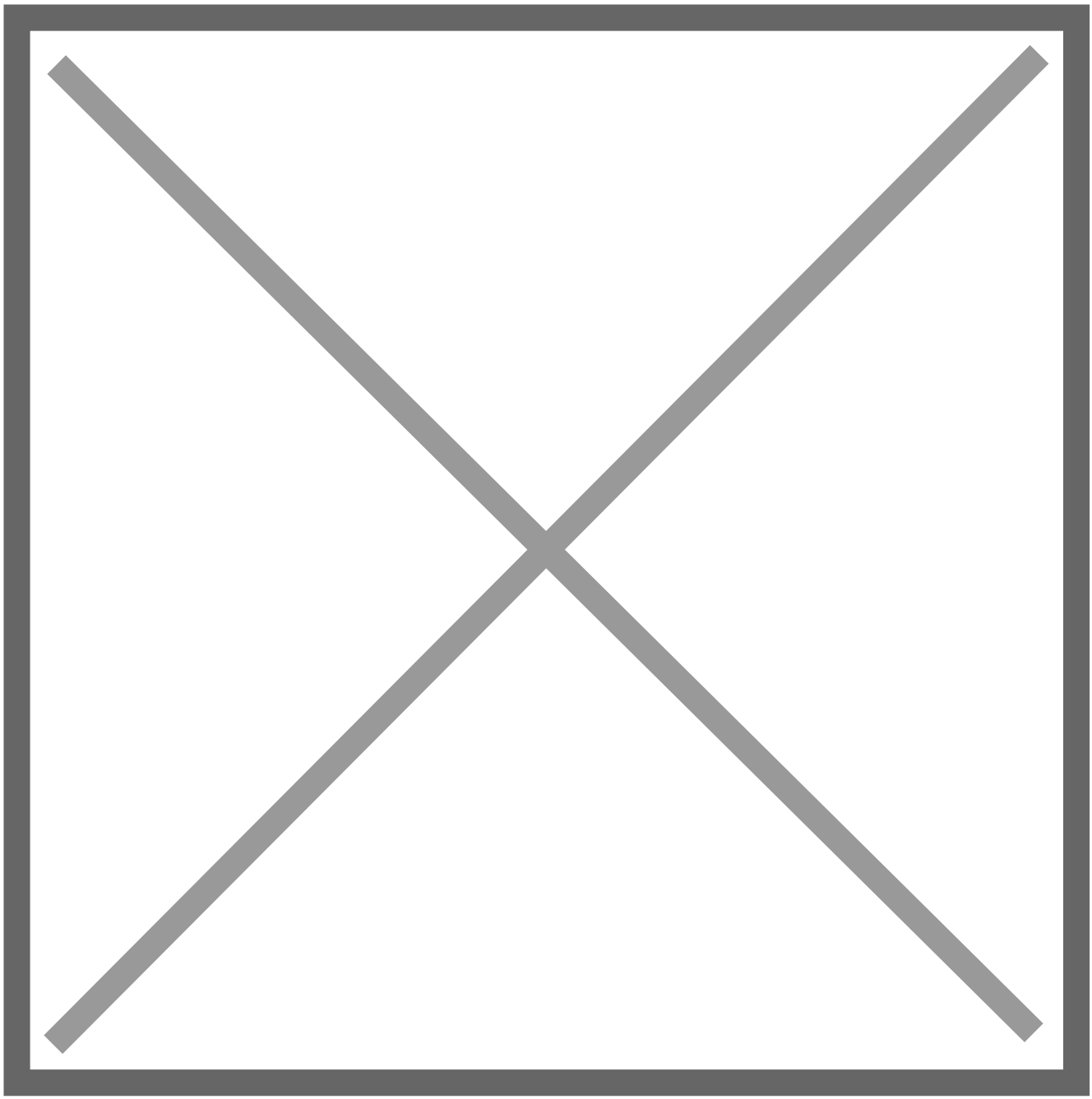

Smoke rises after reported Iranian missile attacks in Doha, Qatar, March 1, 2026, amid the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran that began Feb. 28. Officials with Georgetown University's campus in Doha said in a March 30 statement that its building would "remain closed and inaccessible until further notice." (OSV News/Reuters/Mohammed Salem)

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Doha, Qatar — March 31, 2026
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A Catholic university in Qatar has closed its building as war in the Middle East continues — with the Iranian regime now explicitly naming American universities as "legitimate targets" in retaliation for strikes on two schools in Iran.

Georgetown University in Qatar, located in Doha, said in a March 30 statement that its building would "remain closed and inaccessible until further notice."

The school said it would "continue to operate online for the remainder of the week," adding that "decisions about campus operations are made on an ongoing basis, guided by official updates and the evolving situation."

Amid the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, launched Feb. 28, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced in a March 28 X post that "from now on, all universities of the occupying regime and American universities in the West Asia region are legitimate targets for us until two universities are struck in retaliation for the Iranian universities that have been destroyed."

"All staff, professors, and students of American universities in the region, as well as residents in their surroundings, are advised to stay at least one kilometer away from these universities to ensure their safety," said the IRGC in its post.

The announcement followed Israeli air force strikes on the Iran University of Science and Technology in Tehran and the Isfahan University of Technology.

Esmaeil Baghaei, spokesperson for the Iranian foreign ministry, said in a March 28 X post that the two schools were "among many universities and research centers deliberately attacked by the aggressors during the past 30 days of their illegal war on the Iranian nation," calling the military aggression an effort "to cripple our country’s scientific foundation and cultural heritage.

The IRGC demanded the U.S. officially condemn the bombing of the Iranian universities by March 30 at noon Tehran local time, and "restrain its allied forces from attacking universities and research centers."

"Otherwise, the threat remains valid and will be carried out," said the IRGC.

Under international humanitarian law, which governs armed conflict, an attack on civilian objects such as schools and hospitals constitutes a war crime.

Israel's stated reason for bombing the universities is its claim that the universities have weapons and chemical research programs affiliated with the IRGC and are part of Iran's military industrial complex.

Safwan Masri, dean of Georgetown's Qatar campus, wrote in a March 29 email to students that he had spent that day "consulting extensively with relevant officials," and coordinating with local institutions and leadership at Georgetown's main campus in Washington, according to the student-run news magazine The Georgetown Voice.

"Your safety and well-being remain at the center of every decision we are making,” wrote Masri, who also said, “I know that we are all feeling anxious and tired, and trying to make sense of multiple information feeds."

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The Georgetown Voice also quoted student Remas Alhawari, a senior who commutes to the Qatar campus from her home in Doha.

Alhawari, who is now completing her coursework online, said she was "pretty shocked" after receiving a March 29 email alert about the threats to U.S. universities in the region.

While admitting that "initially, we all expected somewhat of a retaliation on American institutions," Alhawari said, "We also thought Iran would never go that far, simply because Qatar enjoys a very diplomatic relationship with not only Iran, but a lot of the Gulf states as well, and the region in general never puts itself as a hostile neighbor."

On its website, Georgetown's Qatar campus said faculty, staff and students would receive "timely communication as plans are confirmed."

"In the meantime, all community members in Qatar are expected to follow government instructions: remain at home or in a safe place and avoid going out except in cases of necessity," said the university.

Georgetown Qatar included several "situational updates and resources" on its website, including links to the U.S. embassy in Qatar and Qatari government.

In a March 29 security alert, the U.S. Embassy in Qatar said it is "conducting reduced operations with its remaining emergency personnel."

"We recommend that all Americans in Qatar remain vigilant and be prepared to duck and cover in a secure location if the Qatari authorities issue an alert," said the embassy. "Please exercise caution, as the Iranian government and its proxies may seek to target Americans in retaliation for U.S. strikes against Iran."

The embassy also said the U.S. government is " ready to assist" those wishing to leave Qatar by providing updated information on available flights and overland routes.

Georgetown's Qatar campus — which offers a four-year undergraduate program in international affairs — was established in 2005 in partnership with the Qatar Foundation.

The nonprofit foundation fosters collaboration among education and research institutions to enhance educational opportunities in Qatar.

Foundation-affiliated schools, including the Georgetown Qatar campus, are located in the Education City complex, which spans approximately 5 square miles in Doha. On its website, the Qatar Foundation said that "all activities at Education City are cancelled until further notice."

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