



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education & Workforce
July 15, 2025, Hearing

Responses to Questions for the Record
Dr. Robert M. Groves, Interim President, Georgetown University
August 20, 2025

1. Dr. Groves, at Georgetown we are hearing there are concerns that Jewish services are not supported and fundraising and organizational efforts to facilitate services for Jewish students are often stymied, disrupted and cancelled.

a. There has even been an instance of one organization having its official students club status revoked immediately after being granted, with no reason given, and important programs like its High Holiday Services and supervised Kosher for Passover food services abruptly cancelled.

b. While the University has seemingly limitless ongoing "conversations" and "discussions" about more Jewish affiliated services, it significantly hampers the operational and financial abilities of these services other than the "ministry" ones, which creates difficulty and insufficient religious life identity opportunities for hundreds of Jewish students there. Please provide an update on the progress being made to remedy these issues.

Georgetown has a proud, decades-long commitment to supporting and celebrating Jewish life on campus. We invest in Jewish life as a vital part of our community and have extensive Jewish Life opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. Notably, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) gave Georgetown an "Excellent" rating for "Jewish Life on Campus" in its 2025 Campus Antisemitism Report Card.

In 1968, Georgetown became the first U.S. Catholic university to hire a full-time Rabbi. Today, the Office of Jewish Life supports students in their growth and development as they pursue lives of meaning, purpose, and belonging. We host weekly Shabbat service and communal dinners in Georgetown's newly-renovated Jewish sacred space, the Makóm; oversee the GU-ish

engagement program and Bayit, the Jewish Living Learning Community (LLC); and offer one-on-one rabbinic support for coping with personal life challenges and engaging life's big questions. We also offer kosher dining, observance accommodations for religious holidays and hold High Holiday services in our largest venue, Gaston Hall, that are open to the entire DC-area Jewish community; and Georgetown's sukkah is on the front lawn each year.

The Jewish Life team also regularly partners with students to organize and lead learning, social events, and holiday celebrations; works with other faith leaders to encourage interreligious dialogue and understanding on campus; and advocates for the needs and concerns of Jewish students within the university. Last year, the Office of Jewish Life helped organize community memorials to mourn those who were lost in the October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel and remember others still held hostage, including a university-wide Yizkor memorial service.

The Office of Jewish Life and the Center for Jewish Civilization (CJC) host events throughout the year where Jewish students build community and learn from national and global experts. Rosh Hashanah and Hanukkah events provide an opportunity for Jewish students to celebrate and share their heritage with other members of the Georgetown community, including classmates and university leaders. On September 19, 2024, Dr. Bruce Hoffman, a professor in Georgetown's School of Foreign Service and a national expert on terrorism, moderated a discussion with four family members of U.S. citizens who have been held hostage to discuss their efforts to help get their loved ones released and the prospects for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. On October 9, 2024, the CJC hosted a conversation with then Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt entitled, "Antisemitism as a Tool for Malign Influence - And Its Effects on Democracy." On February 25, 2025, the CJC hosted "Working Towards a Shared Future: A Discussion With Peacebuilders From Israel and Palestine" with Hiba Qasas and Kobi Skolnick, two accomplished professionals committed to and working towards a peaceful and shared future for Israelis and Palestinians. These are only a few examples of Jewish cultural and academic events on campus in recent years.

With respect to part (a) of the question, Georgetown welcomes external religious organizations to apply for affiliation through our Campus Ministry. I understand that one unaffiliated external Jewish organization did not follow University rules for hosting events on campus, and as a result, was not permitted to hold those events. Georgetown's Office of Jewish Life services, including High Holidays services, and Shabbat services in Makóm – the dedicated Jewish sacred space on campus – were not cancelled or disrupted.

2. Dr. Groves, I'm sure you remember Georgetown faculty member Dr. Jonathan Brown, who holds a Chaired Professorship within the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. I'm sure you remember his social media post after the U.S. conducted strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, stating "I hope Iran does some symbolic strike on a [U.S. military] base."

Why is a professor who publicly hoped for an Iranian strike on a U.S. military base still holding a chaired professorship within a Georgetown academic department?

We were appalled by the social media post in question and condemned it immediately. Within minutes of learning of it, the Dean of the School of Foreign Service called Dr. Brown directly. He deleted the post and stated that he would never want any harm to come to American servicemembers. The University reviewed this matter under established university processes, and the review has concluded. Professor Brown remains on leave from the University for the Fall 2025 semester.

Professor Brown no longer holds any administrative leadership position in the College of Arts and Sciences's Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

3. You said your administration is appalled by his post. What specific disciplinary action have you taken against Dr. Brown?

See above.

4. I'm sure you also know Dr. Brown is married to the daughter of convicted terror financier Sami Al Arian [Ari-an]. Does keeping someone like Dr. Brown in a position of power send a message to Jewish students that your university takes their safety or concerns seriously?

The safety and well-being of every student, including our Jewish students, is our highest priority. They have the right to feel safe, supported, and respected at Georgetown. If they do not, that is unacceptable.

Since October 7, we have significantly increased campus security, expanded patrols around Jewish religious gathering spaces, and met regularly with Jewish student leaders. We have launched new training and awareness programs, including mandatory education on preventing religious discrimination and antisemitism, for more than 700 student leaders and, beginning in August 2025, all incoming first-year undergraduate students will receive this training as part of their orientation. We will continue to take concrete steps to protect Jewish students and ensure every member of our community can learn and thrive without fear.

Family relationships do not determine employment at Georgetown.

5. You allow faculty members to use "academic freedom" to endorse violence and glorify terrorism. At what point does that cross into institutional complicity in inciting hatred and antisemitism?

Academic freedom allows our faculty to engage in rigorous debate about ideas within their fields, challenge ideas, and publish their research without political litmus tests, even when their viewpoints differ sharply from the mainstream. It is a cornerstone of Georgetown's mission. This commitment to thought diversity is essential to preparing students to think critically and engage the world as informed citizens.

However, there are limits to speech. Speech that calls for violence or constitutes harassment is not protected by our policies. We hold faculty accountable to Georgetown's policies, and we investigate every report of antisemitic discrimination and harassment. If a policy violation is found to have occurred, the University takes appropriate action.

We reject antisemitism in all forms and will not tolerate conduct that threatens the safety of Jewish students or any other group. Every report of antisemitic discrimination or harassment is taken seriously, reviewed under our policies, and addressed promptly. Our goal is to ensure Georgetown remains a place where all ideas can be critically examined, but where every member of our community is safe, respected, and supported.

6. Dr. Groves, I'm sure you are familiar with Georgetown postdoctoral researcher Badar Khan Suri. Are you aware that Suri is married to Georgetown graduate student Mapheze Saleh, the daughter of Ahmed Yousef, who reportedly served as a senior adviser to the Hamas Foreign Ministry and Ismail Haniyeh in 2008 and the Foreign Ministry Director-General of Hamas in 2010?

Yes, we are aware that Dr. Suri is married to Ms. Saleh.

We do not judge members of the Georgetown community based on who their relatives are or what views their relatives hold. Protecting the safety of the Georgetown University community is my most important responsibility. We review every report we receive to determine if there is a safety concern or possibility of harassment, and we take action as needed to protect our community.

7. Did you know that as of March 2025, Saleh's Georgetown biography stated that she worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Gaza, which is effectively controlled by Hamas?

Ms. Saleh is a Georgetown community member in good standing, and we have received no complaints about her conduct. As is true for any member of our community, any views she may hold are her own, and she does not speak for or represent Georgetown University.

8. I'm sure you know that her husband Khan Suri was detained by ICE leading to 150 Georgetown students, faculty, and community members staging a walkout in his honor. In fact, Georgetown administrators and faculty have written public letters of support for Khan Suri, including Joel Hellman the Dean of the Foreign Service School. Dr. Groves, you called Khan Suri's detention "troubling" and "asserted a commitment to free speech grounded in Georgetown's Jesuit values." Can you explain why the detention of a Georgetown faculty member who blatantly supports a terrorist organization, is married to a Hamas member, and is pictured with Former Hamas Political Leader Ismail Haniyeh one of the masterminds of the horrific October 7th massacre is "troubling"?

Dr. Suri was granted a U.S. visa to pursue academic research and has not been accused of any wrongdoing during his time at Georgetown. During his time on campus, we are not aware of his engaging in any illegal activity or posing a security threat to campus and did not receive any complaints about his conduct. We support our community members' rights to free and open inquiry, deliberation and debate, even if the underlying ideas may be difficult, controversial or objectionable. Dr. Suri's visa and SEVIS status were reinstated by the United States government, and we expect the legal system to continue to adjudicate this case fairly.

9. Dr. Groves, Georgetown University operates a major satellite campus in Qatar, a country whose national education curriculum has been explicitly condemned by the U.S. State Department for teaching antisemitism, extremist religious intolerance, and glorification of violent jihad. Georgetown has accepted over \$1 billion from Qatar, a country which explicitly denies Israel's right to exist and labels all Israeli territory as "Occupied Palestine." Does Georgetown's financial relationship with Qatar influence your university's approach or policies on issues related to Israel, antisemitism, or Middle East education?

No. Since the 16th century, Jesuits have worked at the frontier, promoting interreligious and intercultural understanding throughout the world through educating youth. As an institution that trains both U.S. and foreign diplomats, we believe that our position in Qatar promotes not only Georgetown's values and interests, but American values and interests. We do not agree with everything that the Qatari government supports, and we wholly condemn the reprehensible actions of Hamas, but we think it is better to engage, educate and share American values, rather than withdraw.

No foreign government determines how we operate. We maintain complete operational autonomy and academic authority over Georgetown University in Qatar, including all decisions relating to curriculum, research and faculty hiring. We have the same commitment to academic freedom in Doha as in Washington, DC; our policies related to discrimination, harassment, and

antisemitism apply to both campuses; and any conduct that is alleged to violate those policies is investigated and addressed.

10. What specific measures does Georgetown University have in place at your Qatar campus to ensure that Georgetown students and faculty are not exposed to or influenced by Qatar’s well documented antisemitic, extremist, and jihad-glorifying educational content?

Our presence in different countries around the world, including Qatar, reflects Georgetown’s core Catholic and Jesuit mission. We seek to prepare future leaders, promote interfaith understanding, and uphold our values through engagement. We offer the same courses in Doha as our students in DC within the School of Foreign Service are offered. Georgetown maintains complete operational autonomy and academic authority over Georgetown University in Qatar. Georgetown has full authority to make all decisions relating to curriculum, research and faculty hiring.

Moreover, our policies related to discrimination, harassment, and antisemitism apply to our campuses in Washington, DC, and Doha alike; and any conduct that is alleged to violate those policies is investigated and addressed. In both Doha, and DC, beginning with the Fall 2025 semester, we will address antisemitism alongside other forms of discrimination in our training for all new students. We offer multiple well-publicized options for reporting concerns about discriminatory or harassing behavior so that it can be addressed and prevented.

11. Can you identify any courses or programs at Georgetown’s Qatar campus explicitly designed to counter antisemitism, extremism, and the glorification of violence that Qatar promotes in its public education?

A core part of Georgetown’s mission is to foster interreligious dialogue and understanding. The same Jesuit values of “people for others,” “care for the whole person,” “inter-religious dialogue,” and others, are key to the culture we have built in Doha. Through our curriculum and co-curricular activities, we create spaces for thoughtful encounters among students of different backgrounds, to increase understanding and tolerance. We do this both in Washington, DC, and in Doha, and academic courses on both of these campuses engage with the topics of antisemitism, extremism, religious violence and how to counter it, and countless other difficult and pressing problems facing the world.

A program we are particularly proud of at Georgetown University in Qatar is the “Zones of Conflict, Zones of Peace” experiential course that enables students to study conflict management and resolution in its real-life application across the globe. Since 2007, the award-winning program has been taking students to zones of ethnic, political, religious and social conflict, with the goal of better understanding both the causes of the conflict and the difficult process of

reconciliation. The course taught by a faculty subject matter expert on the specific region begins by exploring the conflict, followed by a one or two-week long faculty-led trip to the region. During the trip, the group meets with key witnesses, politicians, and change-makers, and visits points of historical interest in order to connect their academic learning with firsthand accounts and experiences with the current reality on the ground in the zone of conflict.

This program has taken students to hot spots in the Middle East where they have learned about the diversity of the respective areas, as well as the social and political realities and motivations of the many sides involved in this contentious conflict. The program has also taken students, twice, to Germany and Poland to learn about the Holocaust, its subsequent memorialization and efforts in regards to reconciliation and justice.

In January 2025, we put in place a new requirement for mandatory training for more than 700 student organization leaders on Georgetown's campus in Washington, DC, focused on preventing discrimination and harassment based on religion, race, ethnicity, and shared ancestry. This program includes specific instruction on recognizing and addressing antisemitism—historical and contemporary, overt and subtle. We are expanding this new training requirement to reach all new undergraduate students on both our campuses in Washington, DC, and our campus in Qatar beginning with the Fall 2025 semester.

12. Does the Qatari Government have influence over faculty hiring, curriculum, speakers, or campus centers at Georgetown? The former president of Northwestern publicly admitted his faculty have “limited academic freedom” on their Qatar campus. So how is it possible for Georgetown-Q to have full autonomy when Qatari law criminalizes criticism of the Emir, restricts discussion of certain religious and cultural topics, and censors materials deemed offensive to local moral and political standards?

Our contract governing our operations in Qatar guarantees that academic decisions on that campus – including hiring, curriculum, and research – are made solely by Georgetown and its faculty, under the same standards as our campuses in Washington, DC. We zealously protect academic freedom and freedom of expression on all of our campuses. Students and faculty invite speakers and debate controversial topics on our Doha campus, just like our students and faculty in Washington, DC.

As with any university operating anywhere in the world, our community members are expected to comply with the laws in the country where they are living, learning, and teaching. This too is part of the centuries-long strategy of Jesuits, who stay true to their mission in frontier lands, but respect the culture and beliefs of the residents.

13. If Georgetown has full academic and operational freedom in Qatar then do you agree that your leadership has approved the following Georgetown-Q events, curriculum, and speakers: mandatory coursework in the international politics department framing the U.S. role in the Middle East as a “neo-colonial occupation,” with required readings by authors who openly call for the dismantling of the state of Israel, inviting a speaker this year who publicly supported the Qatari state’s alignment with terrorist organizations Hamas and Hezbollah, claiming “armed resistance is the only path forward,” while Georgetown-Qatar’s official social media platforms promoted the event, and a university sponsored exhibit last year that glorified “martyrs of the Palestinian struggle,” with no contextual mention of October 7th just to name a few?

Georgetown has forcefully condemned the heinous acts of October 7, 2023. The President of Georgetown at the time was one of the first in higher education to condemn the attacks in a university-wide message the very next day, October 8.

I am not aware of what curriculum or required readings are being referenced. The International Politics major in Doha has two mandatory classes: Quantitative Methods and Scopes and Methods, both of which are focused on methodology for social science research. As is common in colleges and universities, our faculty have academic freedom to select the readings and coursework for their courses. The University’s Speech and Expression Policy permits our faculty and students to host speakers and events, including those that others may find deeply offensive. Georgetown hosts hundreds of speakers on its campuses in any given year, representing the full range of viewpoints on many controversial issues; an appearance of any speaker is not an endorsement by Georgetown University of their views. Indeed, our devotion to inter-group dialogue demands that we expose our students to opposing viewpoints. Our mission requires this, and we will continue to stimulate our students’ thought diversity.