

## **Georgetown hosts workshop to raise awareness about weapons of mass destruction**

The potential impact of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons has long been a topic of concern, although many members of the public are unaware of the international agreements regulating these weapons. In a bid to increase familiarity with the conventions related to weapons of mass destruction, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) recently hosted an awareness workshop for students in Qatar.

Held in partnership with the Qatari Ministry of Defense's National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons (NCPW), the workshop brought together experts and students from Georgetown, Qatar University, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, University of Calgary in Qatar, College of the North Atlantic in Qatar, Community College of Qatar and Ras Laffan Emergency and Safety College.

Students were informed about the types of weapons of mass destruction and the role of the NCPW in carrying out the State of Qatar's efforts to support international peace and security. They were also briefed on opportunities for collaboration, should they wish to study the various weapons conventions in their own research initiatives.

"The NCPW is the national entity entrusted with the implementation of the conventions on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction," said NCPW Chairman Major General Staff (Pilot) Nasser Mohammed Al-Ali. "The NCPW believes in the importance of collaborating with universities so as to spread awareness about international conventions, from both academic and functional points of view, which will ultimately lead to a world free of these lethal weapons. In this context, the National Committee held four awareness workshops for university students to educate them on the dangers of such weapons. These workshops were organized in collaboration with Qatar University and Georgetown University in Qatar, our partners in the national action program, and such activities also echo the transparency and policy of the State of Qatar regarding disarmament."

"It is very encouraging to welcome so many students from a wide range of educational institutions," said Senior Assistant Dean for Faculty Affairs and Research Administration at GU-Q, Dr. Kai-Henrik Barth. "It is even more encouraging to engage with the students in the discussion section of the workshop: their excellent questions demonstrate that they understand why it is so important to prohibit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

The workshop included presentations from NCPW experts about the conventions related to nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as the goals and achievements of the NCPW. A short film about the Committee and the Doha Regional Center for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear training was also screened. Students had the opportunity to split into groups in order to ask the experts questions and discuss the topic further, and the best participants were recognized with certificates.

GU-Q student Haya AlWaleed Al-Thani (SFS '18) was also recognized at the event for her research paper, which won the NCPW Scientific Research Competition for University Students.

Her 30 page report focused on Qatar's role in nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East and was supervised by GU-Q Professor Rory Miller.

“I focused on Qatar because, along with knowing that a nuclear Middle East was a huge issue, I wanted to know what my country was doing to solve it. I felt like it was a civil duty as a Qatari woman to focus on my country because in some aspects, it can help my country,” said Al-Thani. “At first, I was a bit hesitant because I didn't think I would find a lot of sources regarding Qatar and non-proliferation, but when I got to researching I found a good number of resources regarding Qatar and non-proliferation, as well as encouraging peaceful ways to use nuclear energy. It was then I truly set my mind on a Qatari focus for this paper because I felt that Qatar has done so much, and its efforts deserve to be acknowledged and praised.”

The weapons of mass destruction awareness workshop is hosted every alternate year by GU-Q, as part of an agreement with the NCPW that seeks to raise students' understanding and encourage academic study of the topic. This is the sixth time the event has taken place since 2012.