Human Rights & Aid in Post-Conflict MENA

3 AUGUST 2026

Alperen Celik



Source: EPIS

A Conversation with Dr. Moosa Elayah, Associate Professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and Executive Director of AMEPPA

In an international landscape where ending formal hostilities is often conflated with achieving lasting stability, the aftermath of armed conflict presents a complex set of systemic challenges. While the cessation of active fighting stops immediate military operations, post-conflict societies

frequently contend with ongoing human rights violations, fragile state institutions, and long-term socio-economic disruption.

During an EPIS live interview, Dr. Moosa Elayah—Associate Professor of Public Administration and Public Policy at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies—reflected on the realities of post-conflict governance, the structural flaws within the global humanitarian aid system, and the imperative for local ownership in nation-building.

The Illusion of Post-Conflict Peace

A central focus of the discussion was the critical distinction between ending a war and achieving genuine peace. Dr. Elayah emphasized that the end of active combat does not automatically resolve underlying tensions. Instead, violence often shifts from front-line military engagements to systemic insecurity, including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, revenge attacks, and widespread discrimination.

"Building a country takes much longer than ending a war," Dr. Elayah observed, highlighting how post-conflict states frequently face severe institutional weakness. Judicial systems, public infrastructure, and essential social services like healthcare and education often remain dysfunctional long after peace agreements are signed. Consequently, while citizens may possess theoretical rights under new legal frameworks, systemic instability prevents them from enjoying those rights in practice. Furthermore, prematurely reducing international attention and funding once initial fighting subsides leaves vulnerable populations without long-term recovery support.

Balancing Immediate Peace with Long-Term Justice

Addressing the tension between immediate political negotiations and accountability, Dr. Elayah rejected the premise that societies must choose between peace and justice. While short-term peace deals often focus on stopping violence and accommodating political elites, ignoring accountability creates fragile environments where impunity can thrive.

"Without peace, people continue to suffer. But without justice, peace hardly survives," he noted. While establishing full accountability and legal institutions takes time, recognizing victims and pursuing transitional justice must be integrated into peace processes from the beginning to build sustainable public trust and institutional legitimacy.

Structural Flaws in the Global Humanitarian System

Drawing from his extensive research across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Dr. Elayah outlined several critical failures in how international humanitarian aid is structured:

- **Short-Term Emergency Aid vs. Long-Term Recovery:** The current international framework remains heavily skewed toward immediate emergency assistance rather than long-term institutional recovery. While

emergency aid saves lives, funding cycles lasting only one or two years fail to address the multi-decade process of rebuilding state capacity and basic services.

- **Centralized Decision-Making and Bureaucracy:** Project designs are largely dictated by international donors rather than local communities. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often relegated to mere implementation roles, burdened by heavy administrative reporting requirements instead of leading project design suited to local realities.
- **Resource Allocation and Administrative Overhead:** A disproportionate share of global aid funding is absorbed by international organizations for operational and administrative costs before reaching beneficiaries, where remaining funds remain vulnerable to local corruption or logistics bottlenecks.

Dr. Elayah argued that international aid must move away from creating permanent dependency and instead shift power and funding directly to local actors to drive their own sustainable recovery.

Technology as an Enabler, Not a Solution

The conversation also examined the growing role of technology and digital tools in crisis management and humanitarian aid. While acknowledging that digital systems, satellite monitoring, and cash-transfer platforms can streamline operations, Dr. Elayah cautioned against viewing technology as an independent solution.

If applied within fragmented or corrupt institutions, technological tools simply make structural inefficiencies more pronounced. In conflict zones, lack of electricity, limited internet access, and data security risks can further exclude vulnerable populations or expose sensitive user information to hostile actors. Technology, he stressed, should support human relationships and local governance rather than replace direct engagement with communities.

A Message for Emerging Analysts

Toward the conclusion of the interview, Dr. Elayah shared core principles for young analysts and policy professionals studying the MENA region:

- **Prioritize Local Listening:** Effective policy requires active listening and direct engagement with affected communities, avoiding generalized assumptions or top-down solutions.
- **Recognize Regional Diversity:** The MENA region is not homogenous; every nation possesses distinct historical, institutional, and conflict dynamics that require tailored approaches.
- **Focus on Problem-Solving Over Project Management:** Success in post-conflict development should not be measured by budgets spent or workshops hosted, but by whether local institutions and communities become self-sustaining and independent of external aid.

About the interviewed: Dr. Moosa Elayah is a leading scholar and researcher specializing in international development, public policy, and post-conflict peacebuilding across the MENA region. As an Associate Professor at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and Executive Director of AMEPPA, he blends rigorous academic inquiry with high-impact policy consulting. Renowned for pioneering the theoretical concept of the 'Empty State' to analyze institutional erosion, he has published over fifty peer-reviewed works and regularly advises governments and international organizations on third-sector capacity building, crisis management, and sustainable development.