

# Introducing Ezra Karmel

Research Director at Proximity International

Ezra Karmel received his PhD in political science from the University of Guelph, and he currently works with Proximity International, leading its Innovation Lab and providing technical input for its research, monitoring, evaluation, and learning programs. His research interests include public policy, local governance, and elections in authoritarian and stabilization contexts. We spoke to Ezra about his work at Proximity International, his podcast *The Middle East Law & Governance*, and his experience living in Jordan.



**Hi, Ezra! You currently head up the Innovation Lab at Proximity International. Could you tell us more about Proximity and your work there?**

Proximity is a research firm that works in monitoring, evaluation, and learning across a wide range of thematic areas. Our head office is in Amman, and most of our work focuses on the Middle East. A unique aspect of Proximity is that we have built up our own teams of field researchers across the region, including some of its most volatile locations. So, rather than subcontracting our data collection, as is common, we can quickly deploy our well-trained, in-house teams to collect rich data. I sit within Proximity's Innovation Lab, driving new research methods and supporting technical design and delivery across our portfolio. This allows me to engage with a wide range of interesting assignments. For example, my current work includes: Conducting a meta-analysis of rapid needs assessments in the aftermath of the Turkish earthquakes;

Researching local economic development in Yemen; Providing third-party monitoring for stabilization assistance in Northeast Syria.

**You also host the *Middle East Law & Governance Podcast*. Who should listen to this podcast, and what can they expect from it?**

We launched the podcast because we wanted to create an accessible format to talk about the wonderful research being published in the *Middle East Law & Governance* journal. The podcast also allows us to discuss the authors' research more broadly, delving into some of the content that didn't make it into their published articles, and how their articles relate to

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developments that may have occurred since the research was conducted. The episodes give listeners a quick overview of an individual article, a broader topic covered in a special issue, or a new book published in the field. The episodes usually start with the guests providing a brief background about their research topic, so the podcast should be interesting and accessible to anyone curious about Middle East politics. We are lucky that the journal has a wide range of contributors, so the podcast has junior and senior scholars, as well as guests from the Middle East and North Africa.

**We heard that you've spent most of your adult life living in the Middle East! How has this experience influenced your work?**

Yes, since finishing my BA, I have primarily lived in the Middle East, with most of that time spent in Jordan. I first studied Arabic at the University of Jordan. Then I was really lucky to be able to stay in the country during most of my MA and PhD, which allowed me to conduct extensive fieldwork. Throughout that time, I also worked with a number of different organizations in Amman – both local and international. This mix of research and work in the same context has been really helpful, allowing each process to inform my approach to the other.



A photo of Amman, Jordania.  
Photo Credit: Ezra Karmel

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