

# ECO-ISLAM

## Promoting Environmental Justice for the Earth



### THEME

**Unveiling the Potential of Energy Industry Leaders in Embracing Environmental Responsibility**

### INTERVIEW

**Najma Mohamed: “We must practice the ecological teachings of Islam for the planet.”**

### CURRENT

**Islamophobic Red: The Chinese Atrocities in East Turkistan**

### BOOK REVIEW

**Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity, and the Climate Crisis**

Research Centre for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM); was founded to realize the goal of a just, equitable and prosperous society. In addition to contributing to the social thought, it aims at proposing practicable solutions to the contemporary social challenges. We aim to witness the different dimensions of social change on the basis of knowledge and to bring solutions to social problems on the axis of common values and benefits. The activities we carry out at TODAM are based on a realistic understanding and constructive approach to current social issues from the lens of social sciences. In this way, we act as a bridge between researchers, decision-makers and civil society; and advance the possibility of producing independent knowledge about the social world we live in.

## PLATFORM

Platform magazine is published within the body of TODAM of the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education (TODAM) in an attempt to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic and cultural agendas of Muslim societies. Platform is an output of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project. It aims to be a platform where the affairs of the Muslim world are followed and analysed through the activities of influential think tanks, research centres and institutes, universities, political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and the ongoing intellectual accumulation are presented to Turkey and the world through Platform magazine. It keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world through its website and its database of current institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

|                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Project Coordinator</b> | : Lütfi Sunar                        |
| <b>Director</b>            | : Elyesa Koytak                      |
| <b>Editor(s)</b>           | : Büşra İslam, Selvanur Demircan     |
| <b>Advisory Board</b>      | : Ahsan Shafiq                       |
| <b>Proofreading</b>        | : Ahsan Shafiq                       |
| <b>Team</b>                | : Elif Sağır, Ceyda Bostancı         |
| <b>Graphic Design</b>      | : Seyfullah Bayram, Betül Berra Kurt |

**İLKE Publication No** : 207

**E-ISSN** : 2980-1249

# Editor's Note

As our planet grapples with ever-shifting climate patterns, the collective consciousness of humanity acknowledges the looming perils ahead. Yet, despite this awareness, the relentless cycle of capitalist production and consumption continues to ensnare us. For Muslims, the environment and climate stand as paramount arenas of responsibility, driven by the profound understanding that humanity has been entrusted with the role of “stewards” or “caliphs” on Earth. Within the rich tapestry of Islamic principles that govern and guide all facets of life, there lies a profound directive for humanity’s environmental stewardship. Indeed, Muslims see environmental concerns not merely as matters of human obligation but as integral elements of their faith, motivating both individual and communal endeavours, both in thought and action, toward preserving the environment.

In recent months, the 27<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 27), one of the world’s largest climate events, was held in Egypt. Over the years, this conference has been a platform for making global decisions to combat climate change. However, the implementation of these decisions often falls short of their intended impact. It is noteworthy that in the upcoming year, the conference will be hosted in the United Arab Emirates, with Muslim nations expected to play a prominent role. Muslims who are engaged in global collaboration for the environment and climate are also taking action at both individual and societal levels to address environmental challenges.

Nevertheless, one must ponder whether the ideas and actions initiated by Muslims for the environment are adequate in the battle against climate change. Do Muslims possess the necessary material and moral influence to galvanize humanity towards environmental and climate concerns? In essence, to what degree are Muslims living up to their responsibilities towards the environment and climate, driven by their deeply held beliefs?

In this issue of the platform, we have delved into the pressing issue of the environment and climate, which we believe is of paramount importance for Muslim communities. We have explored the theme of environment and climate within a broad context, ranging from societal movements to finance, international collaborations to conflicts. Esteemed individuals have contributed to this edition with their analyses, interviews, and assessments.

With the hope that Muslims, who consider the Earth as a place of worship, will provide the world with a visionary leadership in the realm of environment and climate, we present the Environment and Climate edition of the Platform for your consideration.

*Büşra İslam & Selvanur Demircan*

INFOGRAPHIC

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

6

THEME: **ECO-ISLAM: PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR THE EARTH**



8

## Unveiling the Potential of Energy Industry Leaders in Embracing Environmental Responsibility

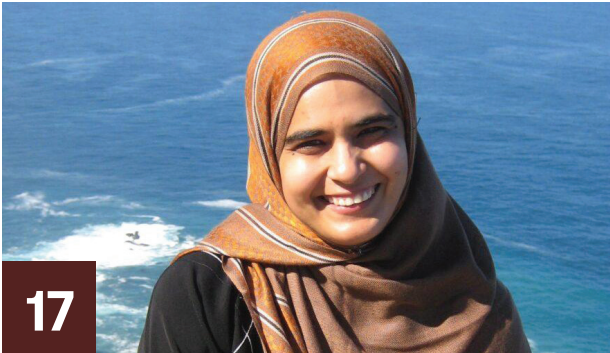
Betül Doğan Akkaş

## Green Islamic Finance: An Eco-Islamic Approach

Ömer Faruk Tekdoğan



12



17

**Najma Mohamed: "We must practice the ecological teachings of Islam for the planet."**

## Environmental Sustainability and Development in OIC Countries

Emrullah Aydın



24



29

## Heading Toward COP-28: Effects of Climate Change on Muslim World

Ayşe Kurban

## Environmental Ethics: An Eco-Postcolonial Ethic Versus Ecological Apocalypse

Rabia Aamir



33



37

## Rising Tensions: Unveiling the Impending Water Wars

Kadriye Sınmaz

## Exploring Islamic Environmentalism and its Impact in Indonesia

Nimet Keskin



41



46

## How Will Climate Change Affect the Future of Humanitarian Aid?

Talha Keskin

## Dr. Husna Ahmad's Perspective on Environmental Ethics

Ceyda Bostancı



50



54

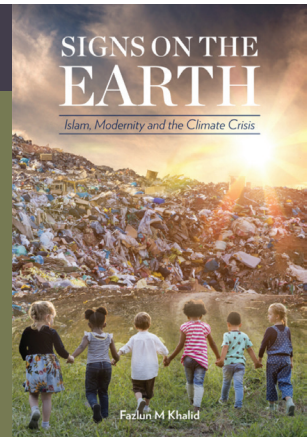
## GREEN INITIATIVES OF MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTALISTS

### BOOK REVIEW

## Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity, and the Climate Crisis

59

Ayşe Aykanat



## BOOKS: ISLAM AND ENVIRONMENT

61



## CURRENT



66

CHINA'S  
NOCID!

### Islamophobic Red: The Chinese Atrocities in East Turkistan

Abdürreşid Eminhaci



71

### Thoughts on the Universal Necessity of Development

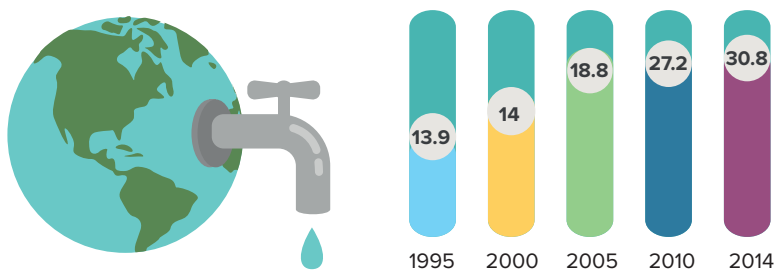
Ceyda Bostancı

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MUSLIM WORLD



## NATURAL CAPITAL

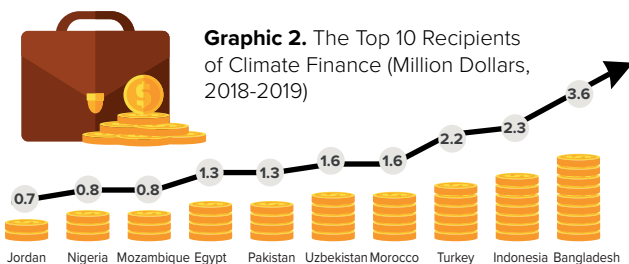
**Graphic 1.** Natural Resource Value of OIC Member Countries (Trillion Dollars)



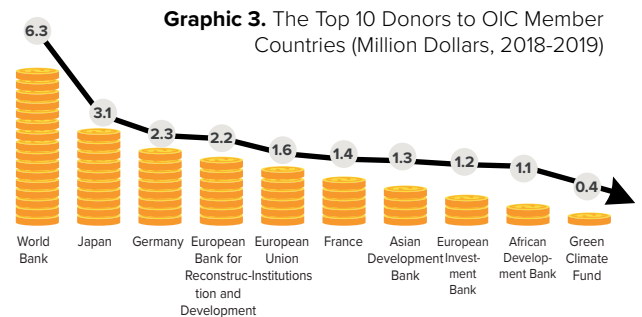
Over the last three decades, the worth of natural capital resources (including fossil fuels, minerals, agricultural lands, and forests) in OIC member countries has consistently risen, with a higher proportion in the national wealth of developing nations compared to their developed counterparts.

**Source:** The OIC Environment Report 2021, SESRIC

## CLIMATE FINANCE DONORS AND RECIPIENTS



**Graphic 2.** The Top 10 Recipients of Climate Finance (Million Dollars, 2018-2019)



**Graphic 3.** The Top 10 Donors to OIC Member Countries (Million Dollars, 2018-2019)

If managed appropriately, climate finance can serve as a bridge between socio-economic development and environmental needs.

**Source:** The OIC Environment Report 2021, SESRIC

The World Bank has been the largest provider of climate finance to OIC countries, providing an annual average of \$6.3 billion during the 2018-2019.

**Table 1. Readiness to Climate Change, 2018**

| Region                       | Total | Economic | Political | Societal |
|------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|----------|
| World                        | 0.43  | 0.43     | 0.49      | 0.36     |
| OIC                          | 0.34  | 0.36     | 0.37      | 0.30     |
| Europe-Central Asia          | 0.38  | 0.44     | 0.37      | 0.34     |
| East and South Asia          | 0.37  | 0.37     | 0.43      | 0.31     |
| Sub-Saharan Africa           | 0.39  | 0.45     | 0.39      | 0.32     |
| Middle East and North Africa | 0.28  | 0.26     | 0.34      | 0.25     |

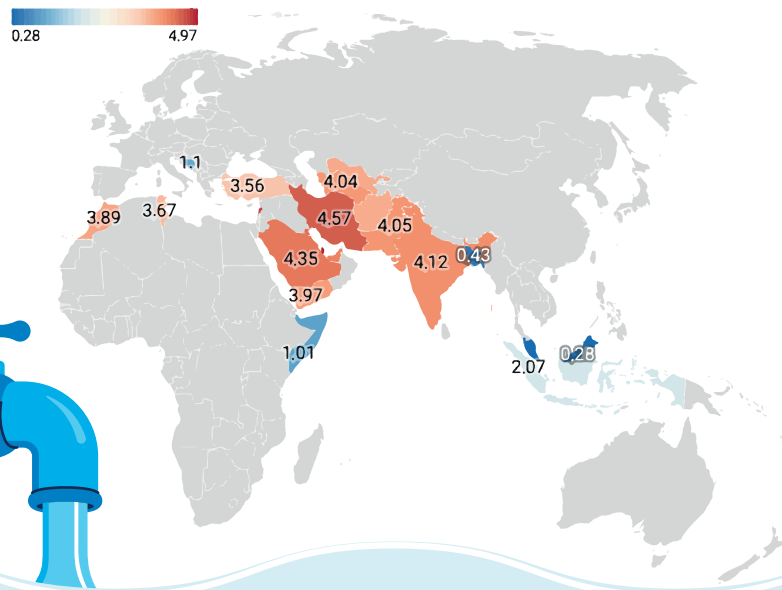
When comparing OIC countries to the world average across three components, it becomes evident that OIC countries have a lower level of preparedness in all three areas. Notably, the social preparedness coefficient, with a score of 0.30, signifies that the society lacks the capability to effectively address the impacts of climate change.

**Source:** The OIC Environment Report 2021, SESRIC



# WATER STRESS LEVEL

Water Stress in OIC Countries, 2017



Water stress arises when the demand for freshwater surpasses the available supply in a given area.

It is observed that 16 OIC countries are experiencing a severe level of water stress.

The Middle East and North Africa region have the highest number of countries facing a severe threat of water stress.

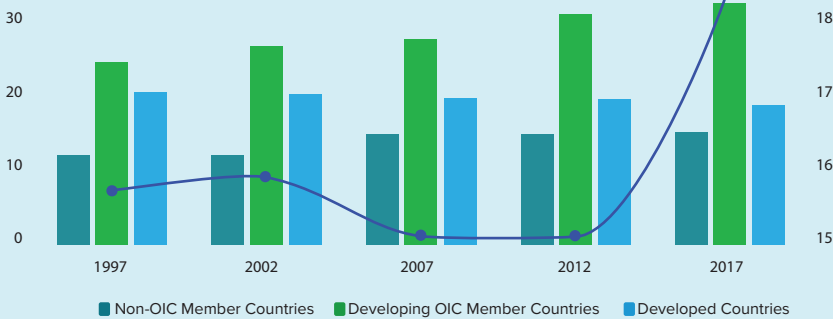
It is estimated that water stress will increase by 1.4 times by the year 2040.

**Source:** Water Stress by Country 2023, World Population Review

## INCREASE IN WATER STRESS

Water scarcity can be measured by the level of water stress. High levels of water stress pose a danger to the environment. The increasing water stress worldwide is much higher in OIC countries compared to developed nations.

**Graphic 4.** Water Stress Levels in OIC Countries



**Source:** The OIC Environment Report 2021, SESRIC



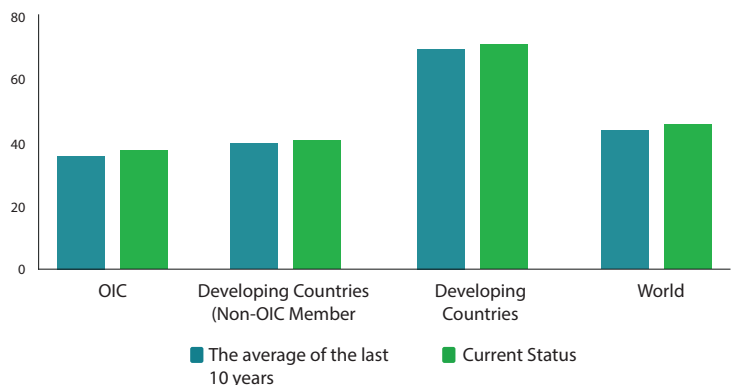
## ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

According to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), OIC countries continue to lag behind other developing and developed nations, on average, despite making improvements over the past decade.

Creating the essential environmental infrastructure for sustainability is linked to a country's economic prosperity.

**Graphic 5.** Environmental Performance

**Source:** The OIC Environment Report 2021, SESRIC



# Unveiling the Potential of Energy Industry Leaders in Embracing Environmental Responsibility



**Betül Doğan Akkaş**

Dr., Coordinator of International Studies of the Mediterranean, Middle East & Asia at the British International Studies Association

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg50>

Exploring the Gulf countries' intellectual contributions, concrete initiatives, and societal stances concerning climate and the environment within their prevailing political-economic framework unveils an intricately layered scenario. The six nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and Oman – possess pragmatic grounds for being addressed as a distinct sub-region when it comes to climate and environmental policies on the global stage. These countries' political and economic structures are moulded by a rentier system, hinging on the production and distribution of energy resources. In essence, the actions they take regarding environmental and climate matters are intimately linked with the dynamics of the prevailing political landscape they find themselves in.

At this pivotal juncture, the primary factor demanding immediate attention is the region's confronting of profoundly critical issues such as climate, environment, water security, and food security. To illustrate, due to the escalating global temperatures and recurrent heatwaves, it is projected that by the year 2070, the Gulf countries' climate will reach a degree unsuitable for human inhabitation (Gulf will be too hot, 2015). Hence, the urgency to take measures for curtailing carbon emissions is far more pronounced for the GCC nations than for numerous other global regions. Within the ambit of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have articulated Net-Zero scenarios as part of their concerted endeavours towards decarbonization (Climate Change in the Middle East and North Africa, 2022). According to these outlined scenarios, UAE envisions achieving a carbon-free economy by 2050, while Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have expressed their aspirations to attain carbon neutrality by 2060.

But how feasible is this goal to achieve? Gulf economies stand as global energy giants, leading in the production of oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). As of 2022, Saudi Arabia produces over 12 million barrels per day, and their published economic plans show no intent to decrease this production (Statistical Review of World Energy, 2023). Qatar, on the other hand, stands as a key player in LNG sales, and its shared North Field with Iran is the largest non-associated natural gas field globally. With its North Field boasting a resource exceeding 900 trillion standard cubic feet, Qatar hosts around 10% of

## “ Gulf economies stand as global energy giants, leading in the production of oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). ”

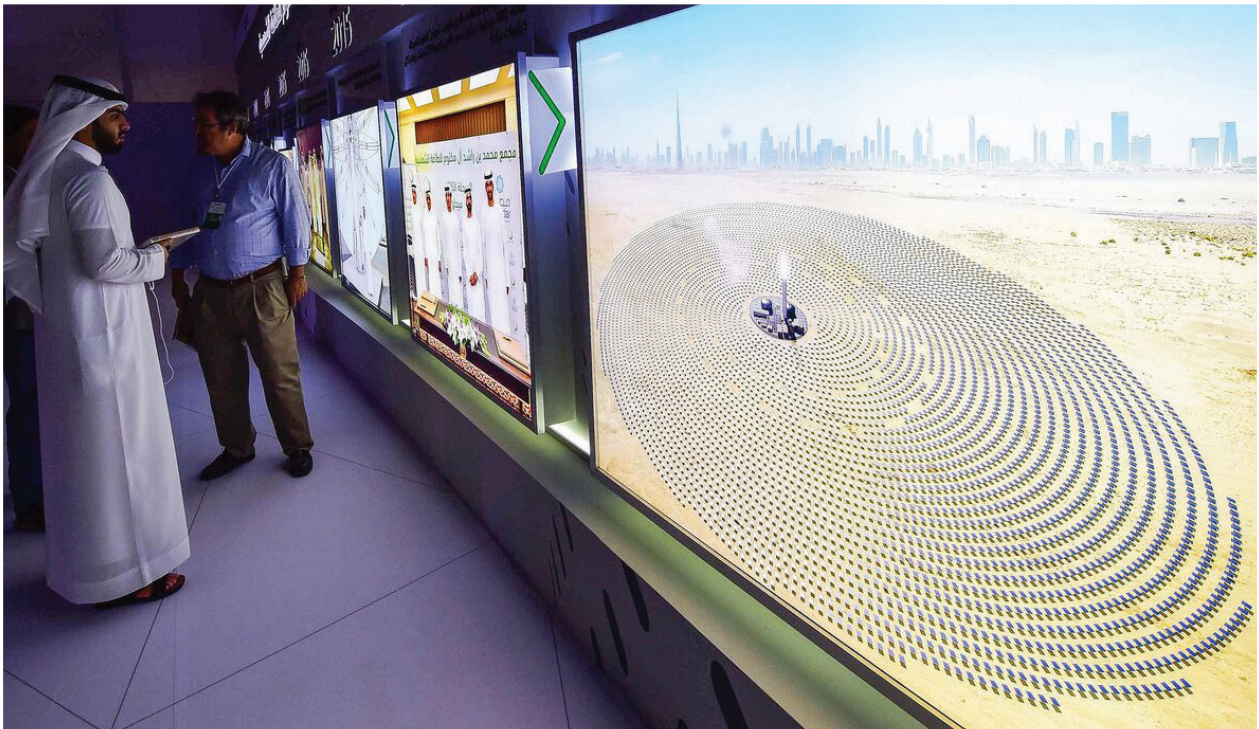
the world's known natural gas reserves. According to carbon emission data from the World Bank, GCC countries ranked among the top 15 globally in terms of carbon emissions in the year 2020 (World Bank, n.d.). Specifically, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, and Saudi Arabia exhibit carbon footprints at least three times higher than that of the UK (CO2 emissions, n.d.). In other words, these nations not only contribute to carbon emissions by selling energy resources but also exhibit significantly high levels of local consumption.

The same trend is evident in water consumption. Looking at the daily per capita water usage figures, we see that UAE (2559 litres), Saudi Arabia (1871 litres), Oman (1488 litres), Qatar (1433 litres), Kuwait (1222 litres), and Bahrain (844 litres) all have notably higher consumption rates compared to the UK's case (351 litres) (Worldometer, n.d.).

Considering the desert climate prevalent across the Gulf region, it's essential to acknowledge that water is inherently scarce. This scarcity leads to a significant reliance on imported drinking water, primarily obtained through desalination - the process of removing salt from seawater. Due to the arid climate, groundwater resources are also limited, amplifying the challenge. Consequently, the water expended in agricultural activities, given the desert climate, results in the wastage of a precious and hard-to-replace resource (Zafer, 2021). Therefore, while ensuring food security through local production remains an option in the Gulf, the primary approach involves investing in efficient agricultural ventures abroad to ensure direct access to food (Doğan Akkaş, 2018).

Furthermore, desertification, loss of biodiversity, and rising sea levels are other significant environmental challenges faced by the region. Almost all the countries in the Arabian Gulf have small islands located





within their maritime territories. Notably, examples like Qatar and Bahrain underscore that continental shelves can be expanded using artificial islands and land reclamation. Considering that Qatar is a peninsula and Bahrain is an island, the rising sea levels due to climate change could potentially pose problems for settlements and industrial areas in the coming years (Hausfather, 2019; Climate Change Impacts in the GCC, 2021).

Hence, Gulf states are working towards implementing a comprehensive environmental and climate policy. However, instead of pursuing a unified policy due to their differing economic circumstances and requirements, they are taking actions that align with their individual local and global goals. Bahrain and Kuwait are devising steps for environment and climate through elevated committees, aiming to boost climate and environmental awareness and expedite decision-making. On the other hand, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia have initiated policies at the ministerial level. Notably, the UAE has emerged as a prominent leader in renewable and clean energy, taking substantial

***While ensuring food security through local production remains an option in the Gulf, the primary approach involves investing in efficient agricultural ventures abroad to ensure direct access to food.***

strides in this domain in the region. For instance, this year, the UAE is set to host the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Additionally, they have allocated a \$40 billion investment over the next 15 years to transition to clean energy (“The UAE’s response to climate change”, n.d.).

A fundamental criticism lies in the general absence of highlighting Arab culture and Islamic values in the environmental and climate strategies planned predominantly

through international organizations and Western economies. The ancient agricultural and maritime traditions of the Gulf countries, along with their socio-economic structures built in harmony with geographical conditions, could foster local intellectual outputs in response to these global environmental challenges. For instance, during the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, Meryem bint Muhammed Almheiri, the Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the UAE, emphasized that her country’s founding leader defined water not as a commodity but as the lifeblood of the community.

“

**Bahrain and Kuwait are devising steps for environment and climate through elevated committees, aiming to boost climate and environmental awareness and expedite decision-making. On the other hand, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia have initiated policies at the ministerial level.**

”

She urged for the preservation of this heritage as a societal responsibility (UN News, 2023). This signifies an effort to integrate traditional values and contemporary challenges. Particularly in societies with a strong religious inclination, it is plausible that the fatwas (Islamic legal opinions) provided by Islamic groups and leaders, grounded in hadiths (sayings of the Prophet) and verses from the Quran, could have a significant impact, especially on matters like hunting, afforestation, and water conservation (Ozdemir, 2020). In other words, alongside implementing the plans of international organizations as policies enriched by fundamental dynamics, there is a need to augment them with context-aware, Arab culture and Islam-based intellectual productions for more transformative societal effects. This approach recognizes the geography and encourages a synergy between global strategies and locally relevant ideas deeply rooted in Islamic values.

Integrating environmental and climate concerns into Friday sermons, school textbooks, and national campaigns will undoubtedly elevate societal awareness. While Gulf countries' national vision documents touch upon environmental issues, their dissemination across society would be more impactful. Transforming wasteful behaviours into societal campaigns aligned with Islamic values can be a vital endeavour. While it might not be realistic to expect energy giants to suddenly cease petroleum and LNG production or transition entirely to eco-friendly energy sources, fostering a cultural shift where both society and industries adopt environmentally sensitive policies

as intrinsic aspects of their identity can represent a significant and constructive long-term step. Integrating environmental themes into Friday sermons, school curricula, and national campaigns could be a transformative way to enhance awareness and foster sustainable practices within Gulf societies. Additionally, aligning such initiatives with Islamic values could provide a strong foundation for promoting environmental responsibility and climate action. While abrupt changes in energy production might not be feasible, fostering a cultural shift towards environmental sensitivity could lead to lasting and positive change in both societal and industrial practices.

## References

- Al-Olaimy, T. (2021). Climate change impacts in the GCC. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/45f8etr>
- Doğan Akkaş, B. (2018). Re-Approaching food security of Qatar: Challenges and possibilities. *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, 10, 69-90.
- Hausfather, Z. (2019). Explainer: How climate change is accelerating sea level rise. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3E89JxP>
- Ozdemir, I. (2020). What does Islam say about climate change and climate action? Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3qC0d2R>
- The UAE's response to climate change (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/45DGBdm>
- World Bank Open Data (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/>
- Worldometer Water (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.worldometers.info/water/>
- Zafer, S. (2021). Water Scarcity in MENA. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3qDvFh4>

# Green Islamic Finance: An Eco-Islamic Approach



**Ömer Faruk Tekdoğan**

Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Islamic Economics and Finance, Ankara University, Faculty of Social Sciences.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg51>

Originating centuries ago, the concept of sustainability has evolved in definition and scope in response to changes within economic and social frameworks. In our contemporary world, sustainability, spanning economic, environmental, and social dimensions, resonates across all aspects of life, demanding collaboration on both regional and global scales. The notion of sustainability, solidified by the United Nations' adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016, and the concept of green transformation through the European Green Deal (EGD) embraced by the European Union (EU), have taken their places on the world agenda.

Centred around the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions, sustainable development's environmental facet encompasses carbon emissions, energy efficiency, and climate change. Its social dimension encompasses areas like human resource management, health, and safety. In parallel, the governance dimension incorporates business ethics, corruption, culture, and values. As a component of the European Green Deal (EGD), the EU climate law targets a reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 55% by 2030, relative to 1990 levels. To achieve this, measures like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism have been introduced, affecting not just EU member states but also nations engaged in trade with the EU. Evidently, the pursuit of sustainable development and green transformation underscores the substantial financing required for the envisaged policies and initiatives.

The global financial sector has also begun to align with sustainability and green transformation goals, with numerous international financial institutions unveiling their policies concerning green finance. Evolving within this context, the notion of sustainable finance encourages investors to incorporate environmental, social, and governance factors into their investment choices. Green finance, on the other hand, focuses on environmental factors such as reducing pollution and carbon emissions. Various institutions establish diverse principles and standards to serve as shared reference points for environmentally conscious investors. Market-leading guidelines for different thematic financing instruments like sustainability, green, social, climate, and transformation-oriented financial tools have been published by organizations such as the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), the European



Union, and the Climate Bonds Initiatives in addition to these, the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) were established to encourage the inclusion of ESG factors in the investment decision-making process. The general criteria outlined in these guidelines encompass using bond issuance proceeds for environmentally sustainable activities, determining the alignment of funded projects with their operational scope, ensuring transparent management and traceable utilization of issuance proceeds, and providing regular reporting on the allocation of funds.

## **Islamic Financial Institutions Embrace Green Transformation**

Islamic financial institutions are contributing to the field of sustainability and actively participating in the process of green transformation. The natural alignment between Islamic finance and ESG principles has become

***The notion of sustainable finance encourages investors to incorporate environmental, social, and governance factors into their investment choices.***

more pronounced in recent years as governments, multilateral financial institutions, and industry players have increasingly started using Islamic financial instruments to fund impact projects. Malaysia, for instance, conducted its first green sukuk issuance in 2017 to finance sustainable and climate-resilient economic growth. Despite the assertion of a natural synergy between Islamic finance principles and ESG principles, the debut of the first green sukuk issuance took place approximately a decade after the introduction of green bonds. This delay could be attributed to a relatively subdued enthusiasm within the Islamic finance sector for such initiatives (REDmoney Group, 2022a).

With a strong commitment to supporting the green transformation process, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) is actively working to harness the potential of Islamic finance as a powerful instrument. Within this framework, its key focal

points encompass expanding green finance in Islamic capital markets, fostering the development of green sukuk instruments, promoting green banking, and bolstering green micro-finance (Refas et al., 2022). Notably, the IsDB stands as the first multilateral bank to issue green sukuk, which incidentally marked the maiden issuance of green sukuk in Euros as well (WorldBank, 2020). Sustainability bonds, green sukuk, and other relevant sukuk categories are required to conform not only to the international principles and standards mentioned earlier but also to be in harmony with Islamic finance principles. Consequently, these instruments appeal to a wider segment of investors, not only to investors seeking Islamic finance, but also to those interested in venturing into the realms of green and sustainable investments.

## Green Islamic Finance in Muslim Countries

In 2021, the issuance of green bonds and sustainability bonds reached \$6.1 billion, which then amounted to \$4.4 billion in the first half of 2022. However, these bond issuances account for only 1% of the total ESG bond issuance and 4% of the total sukuk issuance. While green sukuk constituted 91% of the ESG sukuk market in 2019, this figure dropped to 26% in 2021 due to the impact of the COVID-19

***In 2021, the issuance of green bonds and sustainability bonds reached \$6.1 billion, which then amounted to \$4.4 billion in the first half of 2022.***

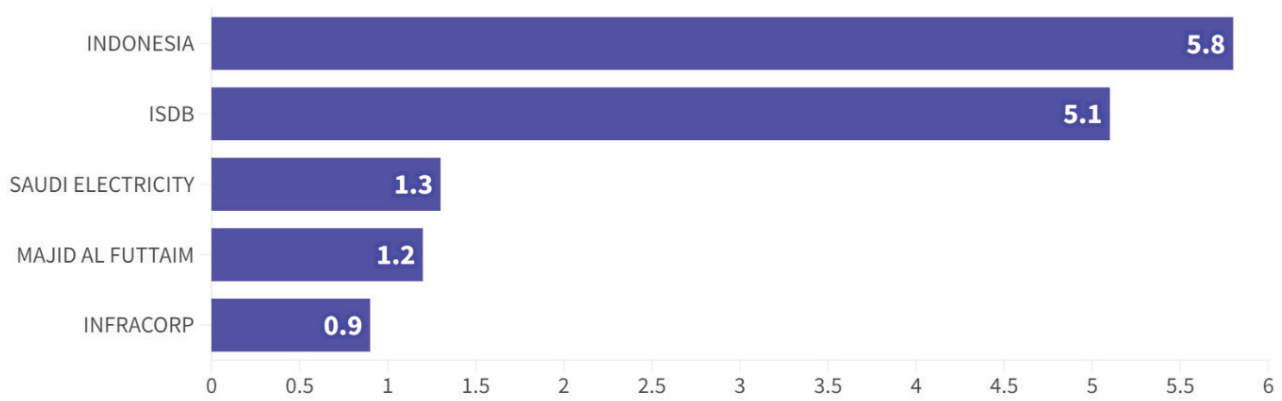
pandemic. Indonesia, the pioneer of green sukuk issuance in 2018 and the first to issue retail green sukuk in 2019, remains the largest issuer of green sukuk. Green and sustainability sukuk constituted 80% of the green and sustainability bonds sold by GCC-based issuers in the first half of 2022 (Taitoon et al., 2022). Back in 2018, Indonesia and GCC nations were responsible for 53% of the total issuance size for green and sustainability sukuk. In 2022's initial two months, Saudi

Arabia led the global ESG sukuk market by issuing a total of \$1.5 billion in ESG sukuk, with Indonesia and Malaysia securing the second and third positions in ESG sukuk issuance (Halawi, 2022).

In the first half of 2022, the total size of green and sustainability bonds and sukuk issued by member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) amounted to \$27.2 billion. Within the ASEAN region, 58% of issuers have established ESG frameworks in their organizations, leading to a growing number of investors considering ESG in their investments. Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM) have also started capturing the interest of investors in Islamic finance markets. Abu Dhabi Global Market has partnered with AirCarbon Exchange to establish a carbon trading exchange and clearinghouse, while Bursa Malaysia is working on a Sharia-compliant VCM (GKP) (Taitoon et al., 2022). Islamic banks are actively introducing new Islamic ESG products to the

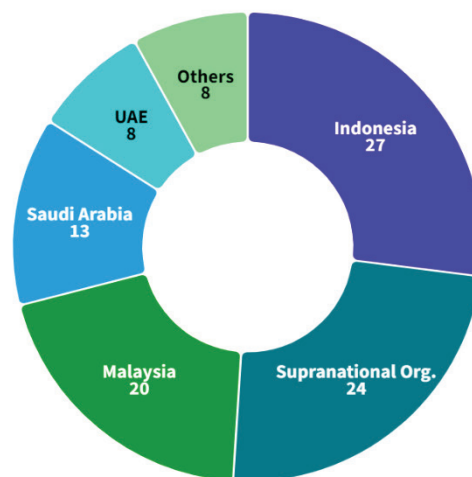






**Shape 1.** The Largest Green Sukuk Issuers (Billions of Dollars, 2017-2022)

**Source:** Green and Sustainability Sukuk Report 2022: Financing a Sustainable Future



**Shape 2.** Cumulative Issuance of Green and Sustainability Sukuk by Country, (% , 2017-2022)

**Source:** Green and Sustainability Sukuk Report 2022: Financing A Sustainable Future

market. Qatar’s Masraf Al Rayan bank, for instance, launched the Sustainable Finance Framework and initiated a Sharia-compliant green deposit program (REDmoney Group, 2022b).

In Türkiye, both public institutions and financial entities are actively advancing initiatives for green and sustainable financing, as well as bond and sukuk issuances. The Ministry of Treasury and Finance has crafted the “Sustainable Finance Framework Document” designed for green bond and sukuk issuance within the global ESG bond market. In parallel, the Capital Markets Board has released comprehensive guidelines pertaining to green and sustainable bonds, alongside lease certificates. Meanwhile, the

“

**Malaysia, for instance, conducted its first green sukuk issuance in 2017 to finance sustainable and climate-resilient economic growth.**

”

Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency has revealed the “2022-2025 Sustainable Banking Strategic Plan”. In Türkiye, the first green sukuk issuance took place in 2021 by Türkiye Emlak Participation Bank, followed by a second green sukuk issuance by the Türkiye Wealth Fund (Tekdoğan, 2023). Additionally, ING Türkiye bank successfully concluded its first syndicated loan linked to sustainability in 2021, with the bank announcing that the generated funds would be employed for general trade finance purposes. Conversely, Borsa Istanbul introduced the BIST Sustainable Participation Index in 2021, catering to investors seeking to invest in equities that meet both participation and sustainability criteria.

Financial instruments in the realm of green and sustainable finance undergo additional review processes and face distinct risks due to the necessity of complying with both the criteria applied to conventional instruments and Shariah compliance requirements. Despite this, alignment between Islamic finance principles and the goals of sustainability and green transformation provides an advantage for the sector, even though Islamic financial institutions and instruments are subject to this additional cost-bearing situation. To encourage a more active

role of Islamic financial institutions in the processes of sustainability and green transformation, policies need to be developed that not only alleviate the additional cost burden but also capitalize on their advantageous position.

## References

- Halawi, A. (2022, March 9). How is Islamic finance responding to the drive towards sustainable investing? *Refinitiv Perspectives*. <https://refini.tv/3YHaQhs>
- REDmoney Group. (2022a). *ISFI Annual Report 2022*. Islamic Sustainable Finance & Investment. <https://bit.ly/3OLRHGO>
- REDmoney Group. (2022b). *Islamic Sustainable Finance & Investment Forum 2022 Review*. Islamic Sustainable Finance & Investment. <https://bit.ly/3OKRtiH>
- Refas, S., Hughes, K., Javier, E., & Hiller, B. (2022, December 7). Islamic Finance Can Be a Powerful Tool to Boost Climate Action. *Islamic Development Bank*. <https://bit.ly/3OIfYgG>
- Taitoon, J. A., Adil, M., Ansari, R. A., Omar, S., Tait, C., & Hayat, U. (2022). *Green and Sustainability Sukuk Report 2022*. Refinitiv.
- Tekdoğan, Ö. F. (2023). Yeşil Dönüşümde İslami Finans Kuruluşlarının Çalışmaları ve Katkıları. *İçinde Türkiye’de Yeşil Ekonomi: Dönüşüm İçin Bir Yol Haritası* (ss. 50-63). İlke Vakfı. <https://bit.ly/3KODTKm>
- WorldBank. (2020). *Pioneering the Green Sukuk: Three Years On*. World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/3456>

## **Najma Mohamed: “We must practice the ecological teachings of Islam for the planet.”**

*Najma Mohamed, with over two decades of dedicated work in the fields of climate, environment, and sustainable development, has served in numerous civil society organizations across multiple countries. She has held the position of Policy Director at the Green Economy Coalition. Among Mohamed’s recent publications are works such as “Dismantling the Ecological Divide: Toward a New Eco-Social Contract” (2023), “Normative Framework to Assess the Just Transition to a Net-Zero Carbon Society” (2022) and “Sustainability Transitions in South Africa” (2019), all of which delve into the realms of Islam, climate, and ecology.*

*We had a conversation with Najma Mohamed, who possesses profound experience in both the conceptual and practical aspects of Islamic environmentalism, focusing on environmentalism within Muslim communities.*

**As a Muslim woman, you are conducting academic research on Islam, the environment, ethics, and actively participating in various roles. Considering that the climate crisis poses a significant challenge for all of humanity, do you believe that Muslims are adequately addressing this global concern in their discussions and actions? Please elaborate on your thoughts and observations.**

Over the course of two decades during which I have worked in this sector, the climate and ecological crisis has been escalating in urgency, impacting every country and economy. Climate change impacts, such as an increase in extreme weather events, have already resulted in loss in lives, destroyed livelihoods and damaged infrastructure. Robust nature is essential for healthy communities and societies, yet 75% of Earth’s land areas are experiencing degradation. Currently, the actions and commitments of countries concerning climate and the environment remain insufficient to address the breakdown. A comprehensive response involving all sectors of society is necessary to tackle this global crisis, Muslims must be part of the dialogue and solutions. Yet the awareness and action on climate and ecological issues





*Cambridge Eco Mosque Designed in Alignment with Environmental Sustainability*

have not yet feature prominently in the discussion nor actions of Muslims.

**Recently, as we have observed in your work as well, academic studies have been conducted on topics such as Eco Islam, Islam, and environmental ethics. What does the concept of Eco Islam convey to us? What elements does Islam’s environmental ethics include?**

Concern for the climate and environment is deeply rooted in all fields of Islamic teaching and culture according to many Islamic scholars and researchers. Muslims believe that the planet has been created in balance and men and women must act as representatives of Allah on the planet, enjoying the bounties on earth within limits. But this balance has been disturbed. The natural limits that ensure we have a safe and healthy planet for all life to flourish, have been transgressed by humanity. According to scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Institute, five of the nine planetary boundaries needed to sustain life on the planet have already been breached. Instead of

**According to scientists at the Stockholm Resilience Institute, five of the nine planetary boundaries needed to sustain life on the planet have already been breached.**

pursuing societal wellbeing, within environmental limits, our economies have been designed to pursue profit and wealth with little consideration for the impact on nature. This has resulted in widespread “destruction on land and sea”. This environmental destruction includes climate change.

Islam presents an understanding of humankind’s relationship with the Creator and creation. In their connection to the Creator, a Muslim function as a trustee and servant on Earth, entrusted with the duty of living in kindness, compassion, and justice towards

all of creation. Regarding creation, they share the rights - just as all other living beings do - to partake in nature’s bounties. Simultaneously, they stand as partners in creation, united with every facet of nature in praising and glorifying the Originator, Sustainer, and Fashioner of the Universe.

The ecological ethic of Islam presents a vision of the sovereignty of the Creator, and the just, responsible, and accountable trusteeship of humankind that respects the sanctity of creation. Living in justice with people and with the

# “ The ecological ethic of Islam presents a vision of the sovereignty of the Creator, and the just, responsible, and accountable trusteeship of humankind that respects the sanctity of creation. ”

planet is an obligation for every Muslim who accepts the mandate to live as a representative of Allah on this planet. The ecological ethics of Islam seeks to rectify people's relationship with the planet, inculcate just and moral behaviour, and mitigate harm. Muslims must now display the transformative force of Islam which mandates us to act for the people and for the planet.

## **What are the fundamental differences between the Islamic perspective and modern perspective on ecology?**

The Islamic view on ecology is neither nature-centred (ecocentric) nor human-centred (anthropocentric) but is essentially theocentric (God-centred). The environmental movement is, for the most part, ecocentric with a focus on elevating and focusing on values and principles that safeguard nature. A theocentric view centres on the status of an individual's relationship with the Creator and environmental care is thus framed as spiritual obedience and part of good actions that every Muslim is required to do, while the modern environmental movement has largely based its call for environmental action on scientific analysis and arguments and technological solutions. I will illustrate this by sharing three key differences between the Islamic perspective and the modern environmental movement:

- *Tawhīd* is often put forward as the key principle underlying the ecological message of Islam. This principle, which centres upon the Oneness of the Creator, spells out clearly that the Owner, Creator, and Sustainer of the entire universe is Allah. His Oneness infuses the entire environmental worldview of Islam with the recognition that nature was designed by Him, is purposive, and functions in accordance with His Will. It is the principle which gives the

religion of Islam its distinctive morphology and makes the ecoethic of Islam wholeheartedly theocentric. For the modern environmental movement, a wide range of reasons exist to protect and care for nature, such as the dependence of economies and societies on nature.

- Humans have only been appointed as trustees on earth, holding it in usufruct, answerable for the just and responsible discharge of this trusteeship. This trusteeship, or *khilāfah* is further shaped by the belief that humans, in their servanthood, are accountable for all their actions. True *khilāfah* (stewardship) is thus not about dominion, mastery or control over any part of creation, but is centred on responsible trusteeship, cherishing and carrying out the capabilities entrusted to human beings with humility and obedience to the laws of the Creator in all human endeavours.
- And third, creation (*khalq*), which reflects divinely arranged structure and order, is deserving of care and respect since it possesses inherent value as the signs of Allah, ecological value as part of the integrated system which He designed, and utilitarian value in sustaining both humans and the rest of creation. In Islam, nature has sacred value.

**In the Islamic perspective, nature is considered a sacred trust from God, and ecology is highly valued. How do you evaluate the relationship between countries with a significant Muslim population and the environment? Besides moral teachings, what economic and political strategies should Muslims collectively pursue to act in accordance with an Islamic environmental understanding?**

Islam represents not only a “personal” religion, but a mode of organising society and its institutions



premised on the ethical guideline of securing the universal common good of all created beings. The values and principles of Islam are therefore not confined to beliefs, values, and rituals, but imbue the entire life and lifestyle of Muslims. As a lived tradition, it provides “for the total orientation of life”. While countries with substantial Muslim populations can captivate a broad audience through awareness-raising programs based on environmental teachings (such as waste management, imam training, greening mosques, and religious institutions), they can and should also address the systemic challenges that lie at the root of the crisis, how our economies are designed and organised.

Our economies are no longer fit for purpose. They are driving the interlinked climate and nature crises and need to be upgraded, overhauled and transformed. Transforming our economic systems is the most ambitious and urgent transformation the world has ever known. This includes rethinking the purpose of our economies - from economies focused on maximising profit, financial returns and endless consumption to economies that deliver wellbeing, justice and sufficiency. We need new ways of governing, measuring and financing our economies. This includes reforming our production and consumption patterns so we

restore balance and stop the levels of pollution and exploitation. In Muslim countries, the environmental movement can begin to advocate for new ways of thinking about we make, spend and invest money. How can we foster a green economy rather than a greed economy? How can we support the most climate vulnerable communities and groups? How to invest ethically and sustainably? We need to interrogate our fossil fuel intensive energy pathways and explore a just transition away from fossil fuels to clean, healthy and renewable energy systems. How can we engage governments and leaders in Muslim majority countries to take brave, bold and principled action to transition from fossil fuels? We have to think about the way we grow, produce and consume food. How can we transform the halal food industry to embody the principles of just and ethical food production and consumption that nourishes soils and souls?

The teachings of Islam must permeate every dimension and choice within a Muslim’s life, from the drops of water we use for ablution to the litres of fuel that power our cars. No good action, no matter how small, is deemed as insignificant in the life of a Muslim. And to combat the climate and ecological emergency, every action will count.



**The Green Economy Coalition, of which you were Policy Director, is an important organization as a civil society institution, aiming to influence and mobilize the public, institutions, and governments. Do activities of such organizations prove to be truly effective in influencing government policies and raising public awareness?**

Social demand for a different kind of world, one which is more sustainable and fairer is growing. And the inclusion of citizens, workers and other social groups is now a big part of climate and environmental actions, not only of raising awareness but also influencing policies and decisions and holding governments and businesses to account. For example, a growing global youth movement calling for climate justice is rooted in the concerns of young people who will have to live with the social and ecological consequences of economic decisions that are being made today. Governments are becoming better at engaging with Indigenous people who steward 80% of the world's biodiversity in the decision-making processes on the protection and conservation of nature. And workers - both in the formal and informal economies, whose jobs and livelihoods depend on healthy nature and stable climate systems, are making the links between healthy jobs and a healthy planet. People must be at the heart of decisions,

“

***How can we foster a green economy rather than a greed economy? How can we support the most climate vulnerable communities and groups? How to invest ethically and sustainably?***

”

“ **Historically, the global greenhouse gas emissions that are driving the climate crisis come from the rich and highly industrialised countries.** ”

---

plans and investments for climate and environmental action. And they are proving effective – in the streets, in the courts, in the negotiating rooms and in the boardrooms – to challenge decisions that harm people and nature.

There have been multiple and interconnected reasons for putting people at the core of decision-making processes. These include restoring public trust in decision-making, opening up the decision-making process, providing information, holding decision-makers to account, increasing transparency, achieving public support and restoring legitimacy and acceptance of policy decisions. And there are a multitude of participatory mechanisms to advance citizen participation and inclusion such as citizen and people assemblies, policy dialogues and participatory budgeting where people have successfully helped to shape climate change and environmental decisions, processes and plans. Civil society and people’s movements have a key role in climate and environmental action.

**You believe that Islamic environmental ethics should be taught to children, youth, and adults through education, and you have articles on this topic. Are there any initiatives in Muslim societies for such efforts? What kind of activities are being carried out?**

From the cradle to the grave, a Muslim is charged with seeking knowledge – of her Creator, of His Laws, and of the workings of Creation – drawing on all the sources of knowledge placed on planet Earth – in revealed and non-revealed knowledges, through sensory and spiritual experiences, in the Qur’an and in the universe. This wondrous search for knowledge should be visible in her life, and manifested in just action in this world, in good works, which incorporate environmental care. Revitalizing ecological ethics in the educational establishment of Islam provides an impetus to not only uncover Islam’s environmental

tradition, but to affect Muslim awareness and action on the ecological question. Educational interventions, given Islam’s rich institutional landscape, have been among the primary strategies promoted to revive Islam’s environmental teachings and practices.

Within the Muslim educational landscape, and amid a vibrant culture of lifelong learning, there exists a myriad of institutions which can be harnessed to share knowledge of the workings of the Earth. Boasting an extensive and growing educational establishment, both traditional and modern institutions, the mosque and Muslim school for example, continue to play a vital role in the educational life of Muslims the world over.

Examples of environmental education programmes, premised on the Islamic teachings on the environment can be found with religious leaders in Pakistan, Jordan and Zanzibar, with conservation movements in the Philippines, and with religious schools in Indonesia and South Africa. These educational programmes have targeted religious leaders, young children and women and men who manage natural resources. Sourcebooks, teaching modules, classroom materials, videos, posters and pamphlets and outdoor educational experiences have been developed to relay the environmental ethic of Islam. Many of these educational initiatives are, for the most part, still at the stage of building foundational ecological literacy – increasing knowledge and awareness of the environmental teachings of Islam. An increasing number are now building the skills to act upon these values and to participate in the resolution of climate and environmental problems. The benchmark for evaluating the success of ecolslamic programmes would thus lie not only in understanding and adhering to the ecological teachings of Islam, but in manifesting this ecological “morality” in practice – in just, responsible use and interaction with the natural world.



**It is a fact that the countries contributing significantly to the climate crisis are mostly developed countries, while Muslim-majority countries tend to be developing countries with a comparatively smaller share in causing climate crises. Despite this, there are concrete steps being taken by Muslim countries towards addressing the climate crisis. Can the teachings of Muslims on climate and the environment provide an effective solution to the world?**

Historically, the global greenhouse gas emissions that are driving the climate crisis come from the rich and highly industrialised countries. And similarly, the consumption patterns and economic pathway of these countries own a large part of the responsibility for the high levels of air, water and land pollution, as well as biodiversity loss that are damaging the ecosystems on earth. But climate change and environmental breakdown will affect not only those countries whose polluting economic pathways have put the planet in this position in the first place. It will impact those who have done the least to cause global warming or environmental degradation, those with limited resources to adapt to and cope with climate and environmental impacts. And therefore, the response to the climate and environmental crisis should be one which addresses the equitable distribution of the burdens of climate change and through climate and environmental action creates a fairer, more just and more equal world in the process.

People of faith, who often stood at the forefront of the battles for human justice, are now reclaiming their roles in the climate justice movement. Since many faith traditions possess a profound impulse towards justice and builds on the heritage of the prophets of God who questioned the social and political structures of their time, Muslims must stand in solidarity with the vulnerable communities and countries by supporting and calling for climate and environmental actions that are socially just.

As the human mind and heart come to realise the impact which human aggressions and transgressions is having on the earth and its people, we need to formulate a response which will remedy the suffering of the human and non-human worlds. The voice of Muslims who care for the earth and its people is rising. They present a way of seeing the world and understanding our place in it; a knowledge system which is viable and valid; and an educational philosophy and establishment which is more than capable of responding to the questions of our time. The time is ripe for humanity to build a world in which all people count, in which all voices are heard, and in which the earth matters. Muslims must play their part in this endeavour and display the transformative force of their faith which propels them towards living in justice with Creation. For, "Indeed, God loves those who are just" (The Table-Spread Chapter 5: Verse 42).

# Environmental Sustainability and Development in OIC Countries



**Emrullah Aydın**

Res. Asst., Istanbul Arel University,  
Department of Accounting and  
Financial Management

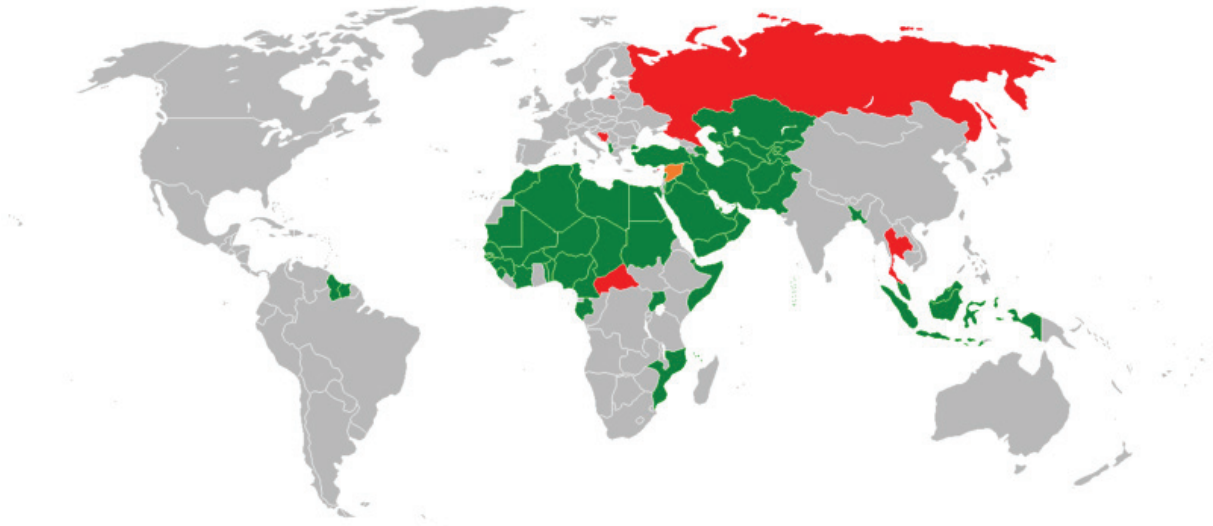
<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg52>

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is composed of 56 member countries and 5 observer member countries. These member countries are situated across diverse geographical regions, displaying distinct levels of economic development and environmental pollution. Furthermore, the availability of energy resources varies among these nations. This current study delves into the analysis of OIC countries, focusing on their environmental sustainability and human development aspects.

## Human Development Index and Sustainable Development Goals

Diverse indexes are employed for the comparative analysis of countries concerning human development and environmental sustainability. One of these, the Human Development Index (HDI), is calculated and released annually within the scope of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI calculation considers parameters including life expectancy at birth, expected and average years of schooling, as well as gross national income per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity. Within this framework, the recently published HDI report for the year 2022 encompasses a comprehensive list of 191 countries, intricately organized according to their individual index scores. As per the revelations of the 2022 report, Switzerland secures the top-most position with a noteworthy score of 0.962, in sharp juxtaposition, South Sudan lags behind with a relatively modest score of 0.385. With the sole exception of Somalia, attributed to data constraints, all OIC countries find their incorporation within the scope of this index.

The literature discussing the repercussions of the economic development process on environmental issues dates back to the 1970s. The first practical initiative resembling an action plan to address these problems was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by United Nations member countries for implementation between 2000 and 2015. Alongside the completion of the Millennium Development Goals program, the concept of “sustainable development” started to take center stage, highlighting its deficiencies. At its core, sustainable development can be defined as the endeavor



**Figure 1.** OIC Member and Observer Countries

(Member countries are shown in green, while observer countries are indicated in red)

to satisfy the present generation's requirements without undermining the capacity of succeeding generations to fulfill their own necessities. In this context, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Index, established under the motto "Leaving No One Behind" has been developed by the United Nations, akin to the HDI. It has been adopted by 193 countries for realization between 2015 and 2030, built upon 17 core objectives and 120 sub-indicators.

The index score, calculated based on relevant indicators, portrays the progress of countries towards achieving the SDGs. The latest SDGs report released in 2023 encompasses index scores for 166 countries. In this context, the results from 2022 reveal that Finland holds the top position in the index with a score of 86.8, while South Sudan ranks at the bottom with a score of 38.7. With the exception of Guinea-Bissau and Libya, all OIC countries are encompassed within the index.



Organization of Islamic Cooperation Istanbul Summit, 2016

| Global Ranking | Countries  | SDG Score |
|----------------|------------|-----------|
| 45             | Kyrgyzstan | 74.4      |
| 53             | Azerbaijan | 73.5      |
| 54             | Albania    | 73.5      |
| 58             | Tunisia    | 72.5      |
| 66             | Kazakhstan | 71.6      |
| 72             | Türkiye    | 70.8      |
| 160            | Sudan      | 48.6      |
| 161            | Niger      | 48.3      |
| 162            | Somalia    | 48.0      |
| 163            | Yemen      | 46.8      |
| 164            | Chad       | 45.3      |

**Source:** UN Sustainable Development Report, 2023

| Countries            | SDGs Environmental Score |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Kyrgyzstan           | 81.9                     |
| Tajikistan           | 79.6                     |
| Suriname             | 78.5                     |
| Morocco              | 77.7                     |
| Albania              | 76.8                     |
| Türkiye              | 70.8                     |
| United Arab Emirates | 57.5                     |
| Kuwait               | 56.4                     |
| Brunei               | 55.7                     |
| Bahrain              | 54.3                     |
| Qatar                | 54.3                     |

| Global Ranking | Countries            | Human Development Score |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 26             | United Arab Emirates | 0.911                   |
| 35             | Bahrain              | 0.875                   |
| 35             | Saudi Arabia         | 0.875                   |
| 42             | Qatar                | 0.855                   |
| 48             | Türkiye              | 0.838                   |
| 184            | Burkina Faso         | 0.449                   |
| 185            | Mozambique           | 0.446                   |
| 186            | Mali                 | 0.428                   |
| 189            | Niger                | 0.4                     |
| 190            | Chad                 | 0.394                   |

**Source:** UN Human Development Index, 2022

| Countries            | CO2 Emission |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Somalia              | 0.04         |
| Niger                | 0.09         |
| Chad                 | 0.09         |
| Sierra Leone         | 0.13         |
| Uganda               | 0.13         |
| United Arab Emirates | 20.3         |
| Kuwait               | 21.2         |
| Brunei               | 21.7         |
| Bahrain              | 22.0         |
| Qatar                | 31.7         |

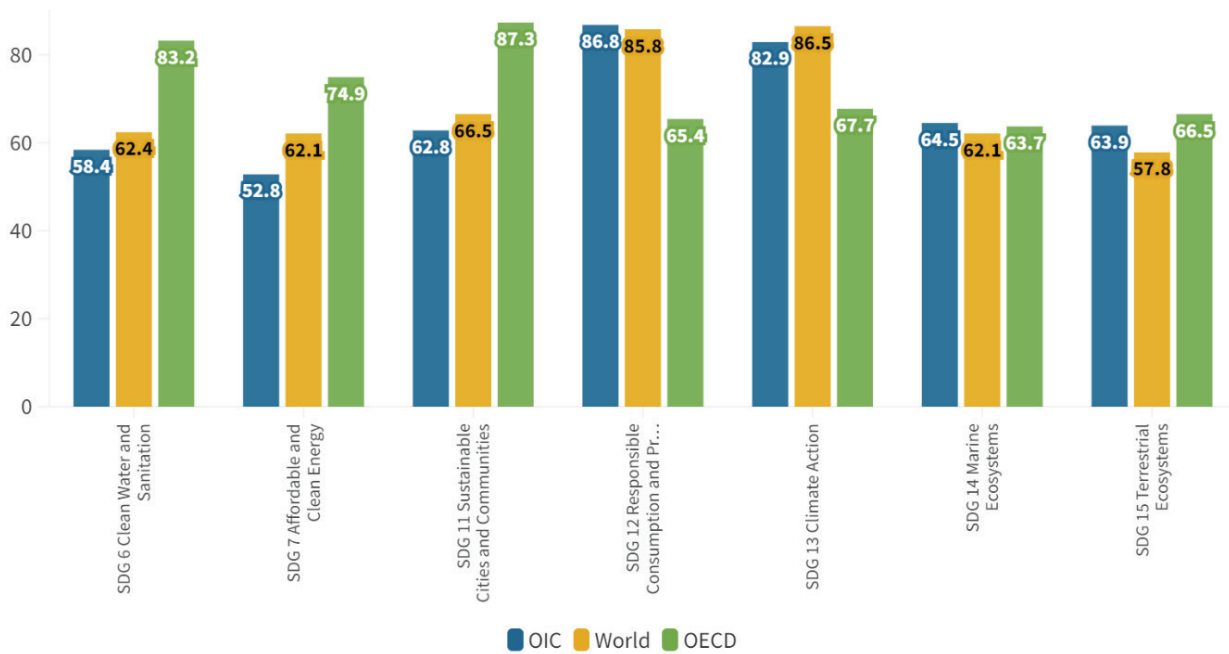
**Source:** World Bank, CO2 Emissions, 2020

## HDI and SDGs Indices: The Situation of OIC Countries

The SDGs Index encompasses 17 core goals, out of which 6 are directly related to environment and energy: “SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation,” “SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy,” “SDG 12 Responsible Production and Consumption,” “SDG 13 Climate Action,” “SDG 14 Life Below Water,” and “SDG 15 Life on Land.” The provided table presents the general SDGs index scores, accompanied by the HDI scores and carbon emissions analysis for OIC countries.

Within the tables, the situations of the top 5 and bottom 5 OIC countries in each respective category are highlighted, along with the status of Türkiye.

In Table 1, the countries with the highest and lowest scores in the SDGs index are highlighted. Kyrgyzstan, the country with the highest index score, occupies the 45<sup>th</sup> position in the global ranking. Conversely, the nations with the lowest scores are also the most economically disadvantaged. Türkiye, on the other hand, holds a mid-range position. Table 2 provides insights into the rankings of OIC countries within the Environmental Index, which is formulated based on



**Figure 2.** Climate, Environment, and Energy in OIC Member States under the SDG Framework

**Source:** UN Sustainable Development Report, 2023

the SDGs scores. This index is built upon the scores of the 6 indicators mentioned earlier, which pertain to environmental and energy aspects within the SDGs framework. Particularly noteworthy in Table 2 is the presence of economically affluent countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, which exhibit relatively lower scores in terms of environmental indicators. These countries share a common trait of possessing substantial petroleum reserves, which fundamentally constitute a significant source of their economic prosperity.

Table 3 contains the highest and lowest HDI scores among OIC countries. Among these nations, the United Arab Emirates holds the highest HDI score, while Chad has the lowest. Notably, the OIC countries with higher HDI scores are predominantly Gulf nations enriched with substantial oil reserves, whereas those with lower scores are primarily low-income African countries. Table 4 presents data concerning carbon emissions, a notable contributor to environmental pollution. Table 4 reveals a noticeable distinction when compared with the HDI data. Remarkably, the OIC countries ranking higher on the HDI index are concurrently the ones with the greatest carbon emissions. Türkiye establishes itself within the top 5

OIC countries based on HDI scores, while occupying an intermediate position regarding carbon emissions.

Figure 1 includes indicators from the SDGs index related to climate, environment, and energy. According to this, except for SDG 14, OIC countries lag behind OECD countries in all indicators. When considering the global average, OIC countries fare better than the world average only in terms of SDG 12 and SDG 14. However, in general, OIC countries fall behind both the world and OECD averages in terms of sustainable development. The core issue here lies in the fact that low-income African countries are trailing in development, while high-income Gulf countries suffer from elevated levels of environmental pollution due to their reliance on fossil fuels.

## Analysis

We base our assessments regarding the OIC on data from global organizations when it comes to indicators such as sustainability, environmental pollution, and human development, as there are no measurement methods developed by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that are specifically grounded in Islamic values. Although the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) may not perfectly align with Islamic values in their entirety, it's important to highlight that the objectives concerning the environment and energy exhibit a significant harmony with Islamic principles and possess universal attributes. The principle underlying the SDGs, "leaving no one behind" resonates with Islam's emphasis on solidarity. The concept of sustainable development coheres with the universally acknowledged reality that carbon emissions and the use of fossil fuels lead to environmental pollution.

Upon analysing OIC countries through the lens of both the SDGs index and HDI framework, specific insights emerge. It becomes evident that countries with abundant oil reserves and higher income levels tend to excel in terms of human development, yet often find themselves lower in the rankings concerning sustainable development and environmental pollution. This phenomenon underscores the correlation between economic prosperity and heightened environmental degradation within these nations. However, many OIC member countries tend to occupy lower positions in terms of human development, while displaying notably low levels of carbon emissions. This situation is largely influenced by the underdevelopment of sectors like industry, which typically contribute to environmental pollution in these nations. In theory, advancements in human development and economic well-being should lead to concurrent progress in sustainability. However, the challenge lies in the fact that high-income OIC countries owe a significant portion of their economic growth to the fossil fuel trade, hindering the anticipated strides in sustainable development.

Another significant finding indicated by the available data is the economic disparity among Islamic countries. Within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

(OIC), there are both the world's poorest and wealthiest nations. This reality raises questions about the extent to which Islamic countries uphold the principle of "unity and solidarity" advocated by the Islamic faith. The lack of collaboration, particularly in terms of economic development and progress, among Islamic countries underscores a missed opportunity to fully embrace the blessings that unity and mutual support could bring.

On the flip side, the urgent challenges faced by impoverished nations, including issues such as war, drought, hunger, and malnutrition, tend to take precedence over problems like environmental pollution. The necessary course of action involves intensifying cooperation among Islamic countries, fostering fresh partnerships, and primarily aiding the development of economically disadvantaged nations.

## References

- Dışişleri Bakanlığı. (n.d.). *İslam İşbirliği Teşkilatı (İİT)*. Retrieved from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/islam-isbirligi-teskilati.tr.mfa>
- United Nations. (2000). *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: United Nations Millennium Declaration*. Retrieved from [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_55\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf)
- United Nations. (2017). *United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from [https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported\\_files/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf](https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf)
- United Nations. (2022). *Human Development Index (HDI) 2022*. Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>
- United Nations. (2023). *Sustainable Development Report 2023*. Retrieved from <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/chapters>
- World Bank Data. (2020). *CO2 Emissions*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC>

# Heading Toward COP28: Effects of Climate Change on Muslim World



**Ayşe Kurban**

Master's Student, Department of  
Political Science and International  
Relations, Kadir Has University

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg53>

The 2022 publication of the report by the International Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) paints a grim picture of the world's future, marked by climate threats like ecosystem collapse, species extinction, intense heatwaves, and devastating floods. One of the primary factors driving this alarming scenario is the dramatic rise in global temperatures. The report released by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicates that temperatures during the period from 2013 to 2022 were 1.14 degrees higher than those before the Industrial Revolution (2022). Likewise, a study conducted between 2000 and 2019 revealed that global warming has led to a nearly two-fold acceleration in the melting rate of glaciers worldwide over the past two decades (Hugonnet, 2021, p. 728). Conversely, the elevation of sea levels and the escalation in oceanic temperatures are increasingly viewed as indications of a global climate crisis in recent times. Although there was a substantial reduction in carbon emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic due to mitigation efforts, the post-pandemic era seems to have witnessed greenhouse gas emissions reaching their peak levels (Bhanumati, 2022). What implications do the international efforts against these climate threats hold for developing countries with a significant Muslim population?

## Global Efforts in Addressing Climate Change

Prior to addressing the question above, it's essential to discuss climate change and the global efforts undertaken in this domain. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution, a phase has been entered where human activities, alongside natural shifts, have significantly impacted the climate.

Since that time, the rapid accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere has been a consequence of various activities. The "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)" was signed in 1992 and came into effect in 1994. Within this agreement, climate change is defined as "a change of climate that is directly or indirectly attributed to human activities, which alter the composition of the global atmosphere and are in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods." In this context, greenhouse gas emissions are recognized as the foremost factor contributing to climate change (1994).

Consequently, each country has committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and maintaining these emissions at a certain level. While the agreement represents an initial step towards combating climate threats, its lack of substantial enforcement power or its limited enforceability has prevented it from holding binding authority among nations

In 1997, within the scope of the agreement, the Kyoto Protocol was signed during the COP-3 Summit, rejuvenating global debates about the future of the climate. This protocol presented three distinct mechanisms aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions after the year 2000. These mechanisms are known as the Joint Implementation Mechanism, Clean Development Mechanism, and Emissions Trading.

Joint Implementation involves a developed country with specified emission goals collaborating on projects for emission reduction in another developed country that also has emission reduction goals.

In the country where the project is implemented, they earn credits called 'Emission Reduction Units' and can sell these credits to the country initiating the project. As a result, the investing country can utilize the obtained credits to potentially increase their greenhouse gas emissions.

In essence, within the Protocol, this practice not only enables developed countries to meet their commitments but also contributes to boosting foreign capital investment in the countries where the projects are implemented.

Clean Development, distinct from the Joint Implementation Mechanism, entails a developed country with emission reduction targets earning Certified Emission Reduction credits through projects aimed at emission reduction in a developing country without such targets. In this process, the developed country gains the right to emit greenhouse gases equivalent to the amount of credits earned. Lastly, the Emissions Trading mechanism represents a market where countries with emission reduction targets can buy and sell emission credits (or, in other words, emission reduction rights) among themselves (Çelikkol, 2011, pp. 205-207). On one hand, these mechanisms offer climate-friendly investments to developing or less developed countries, aiming to facilitate their access to clean technologies through

mechanisms like the Special Climate Change Fund or project-based approaches. On the other hand, they also aim to enable developed countries with emission reduction targets, such as the United States, Japan, and Canada, to achieve their greenhouse gas reduction goals under the Kyoto Protocol at a lower cost.

Another significant development was the signing of the Paris Agreement during COP-21 in 2015, which can be considered a pivotal milestone in addressing these climate threats. According to the agreement, all countries committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and limiting the global temperature increase resulting from such emissions to below 2 degrees Celsius compared to the pre-Industrial era, signifying a crucial turning point in addressing these climate threats. The paramount characteristic of the agreement that took effect in 2016 lies in its framework, delineating actions to provide climate finance from developed countries to those developing nations susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change. However, the action plan known as the Nationally Determined Contributions has not yet materialized concretely (UNFCCC, 2015).

The Paris Agreement encompassed a provision for the periodic reassessment of National Determined Contributions every five years. As a result, **the COP-26 conducted in 2021 not only served as the inaugural comprehensive review of these contributions but also featured a written decision regarding the gradual phasing out of coal usage (UNFCCC, 2016)**. Nevertheless, considering the unmet greenhouse gas emission commitments by countries and the absence of provided financial assistance to impoverished nations, it becomes apparent that the undertaken steps have not effectively contributed in a practical manner.

## **COP27 Climate Conference and Third World Countries**

"At the COP27 conference held in Egypt last year, Mia Mottley, the female Prime Minister of Barbados, who is a leader of a small island nation, stated, 'We were the ones who financed the Industrial Revolution with our blood, sweat, and tears. Now, are we the ones who will also bear the cost of the consequences of the greenhouse gases resulting from the Industrial Revolution?' Her words shed light on how developing





or impoverished countries are compelled to shoulder a burden in combating the climate crisis.” (Greenfield, 2022). **Therefore, the decision to establish a ‘Loss and Damage’ support fund for vulnerable countries highlights the significance of COP-27.** Indeed, the Pakistani Climate Minister, Sherry Rehman, viewed this decision as the “first step toward climate justice” (Ebrahim, 2022). However, the failure of the resolutions made during COP-27 to materialize into concrete actions and the persistent uncertainties bring forth the question: Can COP-28 truly deliver climate justice for developing nations?

It is evident that developing countries affected by climate change lack the capacity to cover the total damages incurred. However, as we approach COP-28 in the coming months, the specifics of what the “loss and damage” will encompass, who will provide and to what extent the fund will be established, as well as matters related to fund distribution, are still far from being clear. As an example, China, one of the world’s major economies, possesses a significant role in greenhouse gas emissions despite being categorized as a developing country. Nonetheless, it has not committed to any form of financial contribution. In contrast, developed nations suggest securing funding through sources like development banks and non-governmental organizations, while also advocating a focus on the most pressing cases to reduce the number of recipient countries. On the other side, despite the emphasis on gradually reducing fossil fuels and the

targeted transformation plan during COP-27, there has been limited progress. The fact that the United Arab Emirates (UAE), set to host COP-28, ranks among the largest fossil fuel producers, dampens expectations concerning this advancement. Certainly, the statement of UAE’s leader, Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, indicating their intention to continue producing oil and natural gas as long as the world needs it, seems to reinforce this viewpoint (Parker, 2023).

## The Adverse Effects of the Climate Crisis on Muslim Societies

The impacts of climate change disproportionately pose greater challenges for impoverished populations. Particularly, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where Muslims make up the majority, faces issues such as rapid population growth, prolonged internal conflicts, limited access to clean water, insufficient nutrition, restricted healthcare and education, and due to climate change, they are compelled to combat these problems even more intensely (Takian, 2022, p. 2777).

In other geographical regions, the average per capita water availability is approximately 7,000 m<sup>3</sup>/year, whereas in the MENA region, water availability is merely 1,200 m<sup>3</sup>/year (Zafar, 2021). Alongside the insufficiency of water availability in the region, desertification,



changes in rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels severely impede the economic and social development of the regional countries. Consequently, the countries in the region lack sufficient capacity to advance their climate commitments and transition to a low-carbon economy. Hence, it can be said that the MENA countries are highly vulnerable to climate change (Namdar, 2021). Therefore, international actors with substantial roles in greenhouse gas emissions should collaborate and establish partnerships in addressing the climate crisis, taking into account the diverse capacities, resources, and infrastructures of the MENA nations.

In conclusion, we collectively recognize the potential threats posed by climate change. It is indeed disheartening to observe that the international endeavors aimed at addressing these threats have, over the years, fallen short of delivering lasting and sustainable progress. Moreover, a notable void exists within the international system concerning the fight against the climate crisis, leaving the entire transformation agenda at the discretion of major powers. To effectively confront the challenges presented by climate change, policymakers must take proactive measures to bolster the resilience of vulnerable nations against its effects. COP-28 should seize the opportunity to galvanize international cooperation through substantial economic transformation, thereby mitigating the repercussions of climate change.

## Kaynakça

Bhanumati, P., Haan, M. ve Tebrake, J.W. (2022). Greenhouse Emissions Rise to Record, Erasing Drop During Pandemic. *IMF Blog*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3OPLx9E>

Çelikkol, H., & Özkan, N. (2011). Karbon Piyasaları ve Türkiye Perspektifi. *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 31, 203-222.

Ebrahim, Z. T. (2022, November 4). Flood-hit Pakistan seeks loss and damage 'compensation' at COP27. *Reuters*. <https://bit.ly/3KB4Q3O>

Greenfield, P., Harvey, F., Lakhani, N., & Carrington, D. (2022, November 7). Barbados PM Mia Mottley launches blistering attack on rich nations at COP27 climate talks. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/45p9o5y>

Hugonnet, R., McNabb, R., & Berthier, E. (2021). Accelerated Global Glacier mass loss in the early twenty-first century. *Nature*, 592, 726-731. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-021-03436-z>

IPCC (2022). Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), Summary for Policy Makers. Retrieved on July 30, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/447soEi>

Namdar, R., Karami, E., & Keshavarz, M. (2021). Climate Change and Vulnerability: The Case of MENA Countries. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*. 10(11), 794. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi10110794>

Parker, C., & Dennis, B. (2023, January 12). UAE appoints oil exec to lead COP28 climate talks, sparking outrage. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3rXBSoj>

Takian, A., Mousavi, A., McKee, M., Yazdi-Feyzabadi, V., Labonté, R., & Tangcharoensathien, V. (2022). COP27: The Prospects and Challenges for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 11(12), 2776-2779. <https://doi.org/10.34172/ijhpm.2022.7800>

UNFCCC. (n.d.). What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change? Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3QzO4pK>

UNFCCC. (2015). Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-first session. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3OuL1MS>

UNFCCC. (2016). Decision-/CP.26. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3OtDmOJ>

WMO. (2022). Provisional State of the Global Climate. Retrieved from <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate>

Zafar, S. (2021). Water Scarcity in MENA. *EcoMena*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3qzUR82>

# Environmental Ethics: An Eco-Postcolonial Ethic Versus Ecological Apocalypse



**Rabia Aamir**

Dr, Faculty of Arts & Humanities,  
National University of Modern  
Languages

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg54>

In the current environment of Theravada Buddhism raging in Myanmar, Zionism ideology ruling the world elite, or the Hindutva movement rampaging in the self-proclaimed secular State of India, it might be argued that perhaps the recovery of pre-modern traditions of religion can be seen as more aligned with peace; and that secularism, despite its commitment to religious peace, can actually lead to a lot of religious violence.

This claim needs to be further investigated amidst the fad of several offshoots of environmentalism that we hear around ourselves. We have quite internalized (and quite rightly so) terms like eco-friendly, environmental-friendly, renewable resources/energy, deep ecology, ecosystems, biodiversity, green ecology, sustainable water management plans, environmental determinism, possibilism, and the list goes on. However, we may be checked in our environmental trajectory when we juxtapose these terms with locutions like green postcolonialism, postcolonial green, green criminology, environmental politics, greenwashing of Palestinian Naqba, Operation Green Hunt, and the like.

Though much greenwashing has gone down in history, we may like to consider three contemporary realms to see how environmentalism is playing out in their milieux. We may like to ask whether it is really environmentalism or only a shibboleth; environmentalism or environmental ethnocide; and eco-postcolonial ethic or an environmental incantation. Another possible question that we may like to ask is that is it purely incidental that the atrocities committed against the local people, their life, property, their habitat, and livestock, are the people who belong to the Muslim community.

To understand what exactly the difference between environmentalism and environmental ethic is, as I contend, we need to understand the basic difference between the two terms. Simply put, environmentalism is a concern “aimed at protecting the environment”. However, its extended meaning is a “theory that environment, as opposed to heredity, has the primary influence on the development of a person or group”. It is this second understanding that ropes in a wider concern about how the environment shapes human development and when we see genocidal waves ravaging the three realms of Rakhine, Palestine, India, or Indian-held Kashmir, we



are compelled to revisit the usual understandings of the term of environmentalism. In all three cases, it is hardly a genuine environmental concern when we see the chaining and sawing of trees or the burning and demolishing of habitats of the local people, to give only one or two examples. We, therefore, need to look into an understanding of environmentalism that should be holistic enough to cater to all people and natural habitats in this world, indiscriminately.

For an all-inclusive understanding of what goes around us, I suggest the term environmental ethics. Simply put it is an ethical statement of facts about a space invoking a historically informed environmentalism that would aim for a balanced and sustainable future of all sorts of existence on our earth (Aamir, 2023). In other words, in the context of these three post-colonies of Palestine, Indian-held Kashmir, and the case of Rohingya in the state of Rakhine, Myanmar, we may see pervasive blanket assertions of environmentalism. This brand of environmentalism seeks to foreground the purity of race, the rootedness of place, a nationalism that borders on a sort of cult of parochial nationalism, and has the propensity of transcending or sublimating history. In this age of sophisticated knowledge assimilation and knowledge production, it is time for informed environmentalism, or environmental ethics (as I suggest) that does not gloss over the aspects of hybridity, displacement, cosmopolitanism, or history.

Since these three realms are post-colonies, we may also call it a postcolonial environmental ethic, a concern that looks into all three dimensions of postcoloniality, environmentalism, and ethic. It may alternately be termed eco-postcolonial justice, which also states the indigenous rights or environmental justice of a postcolonial place. The blatant disregard of these aspects occasions green criminology which, in fact, has a “harm-based approach.” This green criminology allows many “legal” activities that can be more destructive to the environment of human and non-human animals than those deemed illegal, as Damien Short would remind us.

The day-in and day-out carte blanche that Theravada Buddhism exercises in perpetrating the genocide of Rohingya people in the southwestern state of Rakhine in Myanmar, or the Zionist ideology of changing the landscape of an Arab place of Palestine, or carving out of demography to suit Hindutva ideology are examples of those harm based approaches that are occasioning green criminology on the part of the perpetrators. However, by passively accepting the status quo, the world seems to be complicit in this perpetration. As Robbins would like to put it and I contend that in the case of the three realms or any similar case around the world, environmental ethics evokes a moral philosophy that is needed to bring humanity out of its quiescent mode of becoming beneficiaries.

Israeli troops intervene with farmers working in the West Bank.

Source: Middle East Eye



When we see ongoing persecution of the ethnic minority of Rohingya Muslims starting back from the 1960s; the forced evictions in the environs of Jerusalem, the continued harassment, intimidation, terrorization, and maltreatment of the Palestinians in and out of Israel since 1948, and even before it; oppression, subjugation, torture, cruelty, and killing in the Indian-held Kashmir and even other Muslims in the other parts of the Indian State; with the added factor (in the latter two realms) of interpellating the world consciousness into believing that the victims are perpetrators; we are compelled to understand the ethics of resistance of these people for their lives, lands, and properties. We are duty-bound to question the status quo for these or similar realms around the world. And this calls for an environmental ethic that takes into consideration environmental justice, social justice, and economic justice as parts of the

***This green criminology allows many ‘legal’ activities that can be more destructive to the environment of human and non-human animals than those deemed illegal, as Damien Short would remind us.***

same whole, not as dissonant competitors.

It is not that we do not have such models that have not gone down in history. We have had the Muslim Governance Model, in spite of all its weaknesses, inner fissures, and voracious games; and the contemporary European Union or the United States of American Model (though they have their limitations too), where human beings are existing quite peacefully even with all their

differences in their belief systems (albeit with an intrinsic understanding that the ruling government laws will be dominantly applicable).

Though this may be a topic of another article, there is merit in considering an option of environmental ethics because it may evoke that lost ecumenism that the world was enjoying and exercising prior to this modern and postmodern world. It may be useful to consider (even hypothetically) the model of environmental ethics that has been given by Islam.

Without going into much detail, suffice would be to see here that when Muhammad ﷺ was given prophethood, he went to the people of the book for guidance. Warqa bin Nofel was a monk who vouchsafed his prophethood with the knowledge he had, as Allah states in the Holy Quran too: “Those to whom We gave the Scripture recognize him “to be a true prophet” as they recognize their own sons” (6: 20). It will also be environmentally ethical if we appreciate the fact that there are many laws in Islam that have been maintained from the earlier scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments. Therefore, the presence of a big Jewish diaspora living peacefully in various parts of the Muslim world (Avi Shlaim’s *The forgotten history of Arab Jews* may stand as only one example) versus the persecution of European Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may be cited as one example. Considering this ecumenical environmental ethic can, therefore, serve as a good way to separate the grain of environmental ethics from the chafe of blinkered logic of environmentalism.

It is an interventionist field of study, which can be a relevant lens to read the concerns of (postcolonial) spaces mired by incongruencies, and that interrupts the continued vilifications, rejections, and exclusions of ethical concerns in the blanket assertions of environmentalism. The word ethics further educes a transatlantic or prospective cosmopolitanism making an interstitial space for social, economic, and environmental justice, or “ethic of resistance” in the debates of environmental ethics/ eco-postcolonial ethic. This environmental ethics (EE) needs to be implemented in the proper sense of the word, lest we may have to face an ecological apocalypse in the world that we live in, because as Martin Luther would say: “The arc of the moral universe is big, but it bends toward justice.”

“

***This calls for an environmental ethic that takes into consideration environmental justice, social justice, and economic justice as parts of the same whole, not as dissonant competitors.***

”

# Rising Tensions: Unveiling the Impending Water Wars



**Kadriye Sınmaz**

Master's Degree in Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul University.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg55>

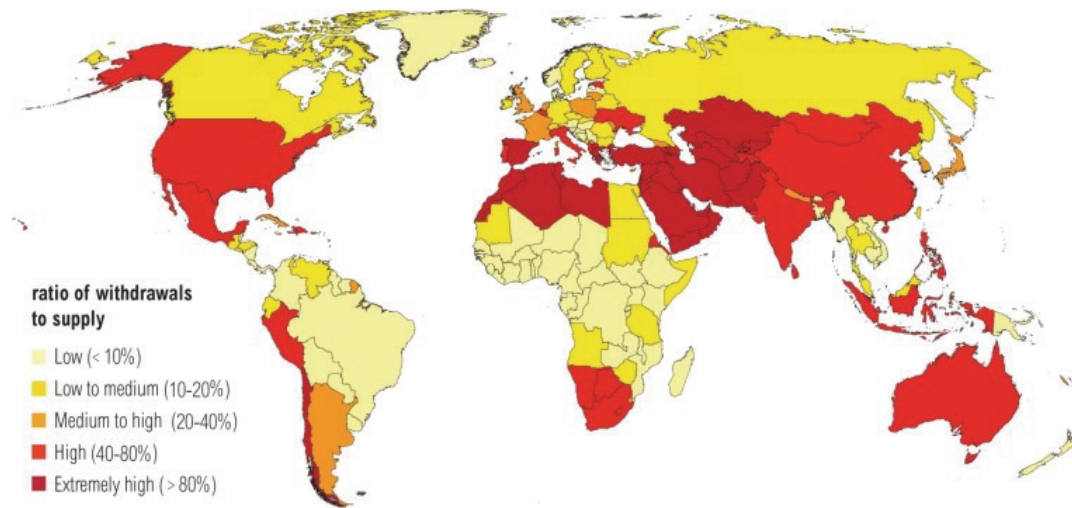
Water stands as one of the most essential components of human existence and sustainable societal progress. Despite our planet being enveloped by water bodies covering two-thirds of its surface, a mere 2.5% of these aquatic expanses comprise freshwater reserves. And out of this, a mere 1% is realistically viable for human consumption due to a significant portion being locked in ice formations. The uneven global distribution of this precious freshwater casts some regions into a disadvantageous position. This situation is further exacerbated by the swift surge in population numbers and the escalating challenges posed by climate change.

The World Health Organization estimates that 2.2 billion people lack access to clean water, while 4.2 billion people lack adequate sanitation. One-fourth of the global population resides in countries characterized by high water stress, where demand consistently exceeds supply. Climate change is causing floods and droughts to become more frequent and severe, further exacerbating existing water risks (Iceland & Black, 2023). The swift increase in the world's population is projected to lead to a 40% negative gap between water demand and available water resources by the year 2030 ("Water Resources Management", n.d.).

The ongoing depletion of water resources and the concerning future projections regarding this matter are raising concerns about conflict risks. Both official institutions of various countries and civil society organizations are expressing the anticipation of heightened conflicts stemming from water security issues. In this situation, we're focusing on the Middle East and North Africa, which are facing some of the most serious water shortages globally. Out of the 17 countries in the world that are dealing with the highest water stress, 12 of them are found in the Middle East and North Africa.

It is predicted that by 2030, the annual per capita water availability in this region will fall below the threshold of 500 cubic meters per person, which is considered as absolute water scarcity. The World Bank has stated that climate-related water scarcity in this region could lead to economic losses equivalent to 14% of the total GDP by 2050 (Hofste, Reig ve Schleifer, 2019).

Looking ahead to 2040, it's notable that 14 out of the 33 countries projected to experience the most



**Figure 1.** Expected Water Stress Levels in Countries by 2040

**Source:** World Resources Institute

significant water shortages are situated in the Middle East. Specifically, countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Lebanon are expected to face highly critical water stress. The Middle East, already the region with the weakest water security, is on course to confront even more formidable water-related challenges in the foreseeable future (Maddocks, Young and Reig, 2015). The failure to meet water supply demands and the exacerbation of water scarcity are triggering political and economic instability in the Middle East. To accurately analyze the tensions within the context of water security, it would be meaningful to take a closer look at the water resources in the region.

## Water Resources in the Middle East

While accommodating around 5% of the global population, the Middle East possesses a mere 1% of renewable water resources. Precipitation, rivers, and groundwater constitute the primary water sources. In this arid region, characterized by its dry climate, a minimum of 80% of the annual total rainfall evaporates and goes to waste (Akbaş, 2015).

The significant water demand in this region is predominantly supplied by four major sources: the Shatt al-Arab River, formed by the convergence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers originating from Türkiye; the Nile River traversing through nine countries' boundaries; the Jordan River emerging from the Golan Heights; and the Litani and Orontes Rivers.

Among the four rivers in the Middle East, the Nile River boasts the highest capacity. With an annual average water volume of 84 billion cubic meters, the Nile River's basin spans nine countries. However, Egypt claims ownership of about 70% of the waters. While Egypt defends its historical usage rights over the river, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, initiated by Ethiopia in 2011, has brought these two countries into conflict. With a total water volume roughly comparable to the Nile River, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are shared by Türkiye, Iraq, and Syria as neighbouring countries. Differences in interpretations concerning the river basins among these three nations have repeatedly heightened political tensions in the past.

The Jordan River, with a capacity approximately 1.5% of the annual water volume carried by the Nile River, is shared by Israel, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. Disputes over the river's resources constitute a significant topic on the agenda among these countries. Although the Orontes River, originating in the Bekaa Valley and flowing through Syria and Türkiye, and the Litani River located within Lebanese territory carry relatively small amounts of water, they still remain important resources in the region (Bilen, 2000).

Due to arid climate conditions, the Middle East and North Africa represent the world's most water-scarce region, and this issue is exacerbated by climate change and the continual growth of the population. However, the water problem in the region is not solely a geographical matter; it's also a matter of governance and politics. Governments are failing to put forth the necessary policies for efficient utilization of



existing water resources and mitigating the impact of water scarcity.

In the realm of agriculture, substantial water wastage is occurring through the utilization of traditional irrigation methods. The scarcity of surface water has prompted the intensive use of groundwater. However, excessive withdrawal of groundwater is diminishing water quality, and regulatory shortcomings complicate oversight of this issue. The failure of the local populace to optimize water consumption exacerbates daily squandering. Additionally, a significant 82% of wastewater in the region remains unutilized. The treatment and reuse of wastewater hold paramount importance not only for efficient water utilization but also for the preservation of existing water reservoirs.

The ongoing water issue in the region is further exacerbated by conflicts and the interference of non-state entities in water resources. Water sources are becoming polluted, the use of dams is being curtailed, and the structures transporting water are sustaining damage. During the transportation of water from its origin to its destination, roughly 50% is lost due to leaks and inefficiencies. The impaired water infrastructure cannot be swiftly repaired, thus intensifying the crisis (Maden, 2021).

## The Role of Water in Conflicts

Escalating water scarcity and ominous future projections have compelled nations to perceive water not merely as a technical concern, but also as a pivotal aspect of national security, and a potent

political and economic tool. Similar to oil, water has evolved into an inseparable facet of politics and security, frequently pitting countries against each other (Pedraza & Heinrich, 2016).

Since the 1950s, water scarcity has repeatedly pushed the Middle East to the brink of conflict or sparked local uprisings. In 1953, Israel's redirection of the Upper Jordan River waters from the Sea of Galilee to the Negev Desert through the National Water Carrier marked the beginning of water competition between Israel and Arab states. This situation became one of the underlying causes of the 1967 Six-Day War. Through this conflict, Israel gained control over water resources in the Golan Heights and subsequently attempted to secure a share of the Litani River by occupying Lebanon in the following years.

One of the regions characterized by heightened tensions is the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The competing claims of Syria and Iraq for a larger share of river usage, coupled with Türkiye's role as the source country constructing dams for more efficient water utilization, have repeatedly brought these parties to the brink of conflict. The eruption of the Syrian war in 2011 introduced terrorist groups into the regional water equation. Since 2014, ISIS has seized control of cities surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates, gaining dominance over several dams. This occupation has inflicted damage on the region's water infrastructure, polluted water sources, and weaponized dam water as a means of threat against the local populace (Sinmaz, 2017).



The swift population surge and concentrated urbanization in the Middle East are intensifying the potential for water scarcity to fuel conflicts. Within the Middle East and North Africa, population growth is markedly high, standing at approximately 2% annually outpacing other global regions. Projections anticipate nearly 400 million people to reside in urban areas within the region by 2050. The rising density of urban populations is placing a distinctive strain on water resources. Within cities, the escalating demand for water infrastructure may further erode the quality of life, consequently amplifying grievances directed towards governing authorities. This circumstance is likely to incite the younger generation to demand enhanced governance and elevated socio-economic standards, potentially leading to confrontations with existing administrations (Baconi, 2018).

## War or Peace: The Dilemma Ahead

The concept of “water wars” has gained significant traction on the global stage since the 1990s. The mounting tensions associated with the allocation of water resources appear to lend credence to this notion. However, research and analyses proposing that water could serve as a catalyst for peace rather than conflict have also been actively pursued. Experts who challenge the “water wars” hypothesis contend that water scarcity rarely escalates into large-scale warfare, citing instances throughout history where cooperation prevailed. Meanwhile, the consensus remains that water can indeed play a role in fomenting internal conflicts (Wolf vd., 2006).

The utilization of water resources significantly contributes to intensifying the existing tensions and instability in the Middle East, posing risks of conflicts related to water in the years ahead. Nevertheless, the presence of rivers and underground aquifers across the borders of multiple countries in the region, coupled with the vital importance of water for all nations, underscores the imperative for cooperation. To successfully manage and cope with water scarcity, there is no doubt that collaboration yields more benefits than conflict. Water scarcity presents

a major threat to the entire region, and this threat can only be addressed by all parties recognizing collaboration as the sole option. To achieve rapid and sustainable solutions, it is necessary to put aside all differences and disagreements and seek ways to enhance cooperation among the regional countries through international encouragement and sponsorship.

## References

- Akbaş, Z. (2015). *Türkiye'nin Fırat ve Dicle Sınırtaşan Sularından Kaynaklanan Güvenlik Sorunu ve Çatışma Riski*. *Bilig*, 72, 93-116.
- Baconi, T. (2018). *Testing the Water: How Water Scarcity Could Destabilize the Middle East and North Africa*. *European Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Bilen, Ö. (2000). *Ortadoğu Su Sorunları ve Türkiye* (2. Baskı). İstanbul: Tesav Yayınları.
- Hofste, R. W., Reig, P., & Schleifer, L. (2019). *17 Countries, Home to One-Quarter of the World's Population, Face Extremely High Water Stress*. *World Resources Institute*. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from <https://www.wri.org/insights/17-countries-home-one-quarter-worlds-population-face-extremely-high-water-stress>
- Iceland, C., & Black, C. (2023). *UN Water Conference 2023: Not Enough Game-changing Commitments*. *World Resources Institute*. Retrieved August 6, 2023, from <https://www.wri.org/insights/un-water-conference-2023-needed-outcomes>
- Maddocks, A., Young, R. S., & Reig, P. (2015). *Ranking the World's Most Water-Stressed Countries in 2040*. *World Resources Institute*. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from <https://www.wri.org/insights/ranking-worlds-most-water-stressed-countries-2040>
- Maden, T. E. (2021). *Ortadoğu'da Çok Boyutlu Su Meselesini Değerlendirme*. *Ortadoğu Analiz Dergisi*, 12(100), 36-39.
- Pedraza, L. E., & Heinrich, M. (2016). *Water Scarcity: Cooperation or Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa?* *Foreign Policy Journal*. Retrieved August 6, 2023, from <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2016/09/02/water-scarcity-cooperation-or-conflict-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/>
- Sınmaz, K. (2017). *Ortadoğu Su Krizi ve Türkiye*. *IHH Research Centre, Araştırma* 38, Mayıs 2017.
- World Resources Management. (n.d.). *World Bank*. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/waterresourcesmanagement#1>
- Wolf, A. T., Kramer, A., Carius, A., & Dabelko, G. D. (2006). *Water can be a Pathway to Peace, not War*. *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*. Retrieved August 6, 2023, from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/NavigatingPeaceIssue1.pdf>

# Exploring Islamic Environmentalism and its Impact in Indonesia

**Nimet Keskin**

Dr., Sociology of Religion.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg56>

Since the latter half of the 19th century, environmental movements have been a part of growing social trends both globally and in Türkiye. These movements have aimed to draw attention to the causes and consequences of environmental degradation, leading to the formation of various organizations and the implementation of numerous campaigns. Concurrently, discussions concerning the attitudes of religions toward the environment and their proposed solutions to environmental issues have also emerged during this period.

Islamic environmental movements, rooted in Islam's perspective on nature, continue to actively engage in various regions globally. These movements propose solutions to environmental challenges by deriving inspiration from concepts such as stewardship, balance, the afterlife, and trust. At its core, Islamic environmentalism finds its genesis in a fundamental verse (Al-Baqarah, 2:30) that designates humanity as stewards on the Earth, appointed by God. As outlined in this verse, humans are entrusted with the task of preserving the welfare of all living creatures, including their own species. This responsibility entails upholding ecological equilibrium and ensuring the sustained existence of diverse plant and animal populations. With these objectives in mind, Islamic environmental organizations have emerged across different parts of the world. Their aim is to draw the attention of the Muslim populace to environmental issues through diverse campaigns, education initiatives, and the formulation of projects aimed at addressing ecological concerns (Keskin, 2023).

## Islamic Environmentalism

Islamic environmentalism can be concisely defined as the pursuit of environmental activities and attitudes rooted in the core principles of Islam. However, grounding Islamic environmentalism in this manner necessitates differentiating between the active involvement of Muslims in broader environmental movements and the specific realm of Islamic environmental movements. As highlighted by Hamed, environmental initiatives led or supported by Muslims are shaped not solely by Islamic teachings but draw inspiration from a diverse array of sources (Hamed, 1993). In fact, it can be contended that environmental movements emerging in regions predominantly inhabited by Muslims often adopt



*Disaster Management and Climate Change Institute Environmental Activists*

secular models influenced by the West, rather than primarily referencing Islamic tenets (Foltz, 2006). Nonetheless, Islamic environmentalism rests on a distinctive foundation compared to its secular counterparts. It derives its inspiration and impetus from Islam's teachings on ecological matters, striving to establish an environmentally conscious ethos rooted in Islamic principles. Its hallmark lies in encompassing all endeavours directed towards this objective. The defining feature of an Islamic movement hinges on precisely the notion of integrating Islam at the core of environmentalism, and shaping its concepts and values through insights from Islamic tenets, and guiding participants to approach every environmental effort with the dedication akin to fulfilling a religious obligation. This fusion establishes a symbiotic relationship, intertwining being a devout Muslim and an environmentally conscious individual, thereby outlining the distinct traits that characterize Islamic environmentalism.

**When viewed through the lens of Islam, an Islamic environmental movement has emerged, with Muslims establishing organizations that utilize Islamic teachings to encourage greater sensitivity to environmental issues among their target audiences.**

Despite the increasing number of studies focusing on Islam's perspective on the environment and environmental issues, it is often asserted that an environmentally-conscious outlook remains a marginal concern among Muslims worldwide (Hancock, 2018). Such studies suggest that Muslims, particularly those living as minorities in the Western countries, support established environmental practices in their host countries as a means to enhance their legitimacy within their communities and integrate into the nation (Keskin, 2022a). In majority-Muslim countries, however, the relatively reserved approach towards environmentalism compared to the West can be attributed to a range of factors, spanning from the level of economic development to the role of civil society within those nations.

Regardless of whether they are in the majority or minority within their host countries, the impact of religions on shaping people's attitudes has been

acknowledged by global environmental organizations, prompting an increase in environmentally-focused groups that are rooted in faith-based narratives in many countries. When viewed through the lens of Islam, an Islamic environmental movement has emerged, with Muslims establishing organizations that utilize Islamic teachings to encourage greater sensitivity to environmental issues among their target audiences. This movement organizes various educational initiatives, seminars, and campaigns. Among these organizations, we previously discussed an evaluation of IFEES (Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences), which has gained prominence by engaging in activities that have reached a wide audience (Keskin, 2022b). In the following section, we will delve into the Islamic environmental initiatives within Indonesia, highlighting the efforts of the Disaster Management and Climate Change Institute (LPBI-NU). This institute, operating under the umbrella of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) since 2015, will be presented in detail.

## **Islamic Environmentalism in Indonesia**

As of 2023, Indonesia holds an estimated population of 277 million, making it the country with the world's highest concentration of Muslims, with nearly ninety percent of its populace following Islam. Spanning across both sides of the equator, the nation boasts a rich variety of plant life, including extensive rainforests that serve as habitats for a multitude of animal species. However, amidst this ecological wealth, Indonesia is significantly impacted by the overarching global environmental challenges. To address these issues, religious organizations operating nationwide are taking proactive measures to contribute to the efforts against environmental concerns.

Among the prominent Islamic establishments in the country, two noteworthy ones are Nahdlatul

***Amidst this ecological wealth, Indonesia is significantly impacted by the overarching global environmental challenges. To address these issues, religious organizations operating nationwide are taking proactive measures to contribute to the efforts against environmental concerns.***

Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The former focuses on traditional Islam and local culture, while the latter holds a more reformist outlook, particularly concerning education and societal issues. Both of these groups actively organize initiatives to address environmental concerns through an Islamic perspective and work towards enhancing the environmental awareness of Muslims. According to the categorization by Dewayanti and Saat, Nahdlatul Ulama encompasses the Disaster Management and Climate Change Institute (LPBI-NU), the National Movement for the Environment (GNKL-NU), and the Renaissance Front for Natural Resource Sovereignty (FNKSDA). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah comprises the Muhammadiyah Environmental Council (MLHM) and the Green Cadres (KHM) groups (Dewayanti and Saat, 2020).

In 2010, the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) issued fatwas (religious rulings) on water usage, followed by mining activities in 2011, conservation of wildlife and waste management in 2014, allocation of alms for water access in 2015, and the religious ruling on land and forest fires in 2016 (Mangunjaya and Praharawati, 2019). These fatwas have significantly supported local environmental organizations in their campaigns addressing environmental issues. As an illustration, collaborative fatwas were prepared by professors from the National University's (Universitas Nasional-UNAS) Islamic Studies Center and environmental groups in Jakarta, focusing on endangered animals. These fatwas contributed to raising awareness about conserving the habitats of Javan rhinos in Ujung Kulon and Sumatran tigers in West Sumatra, encouraging villagers to act more responsibly. An activist emphasized the importance of this collaboration, stating, "There was no clear explanation before these fatwas about why animals should be protected and why Muslims should be encouraged to protect them" (Rochmyaningsih, 2020).

Another notable collaboration involved the restoration of peatland areas, carried out in partnership

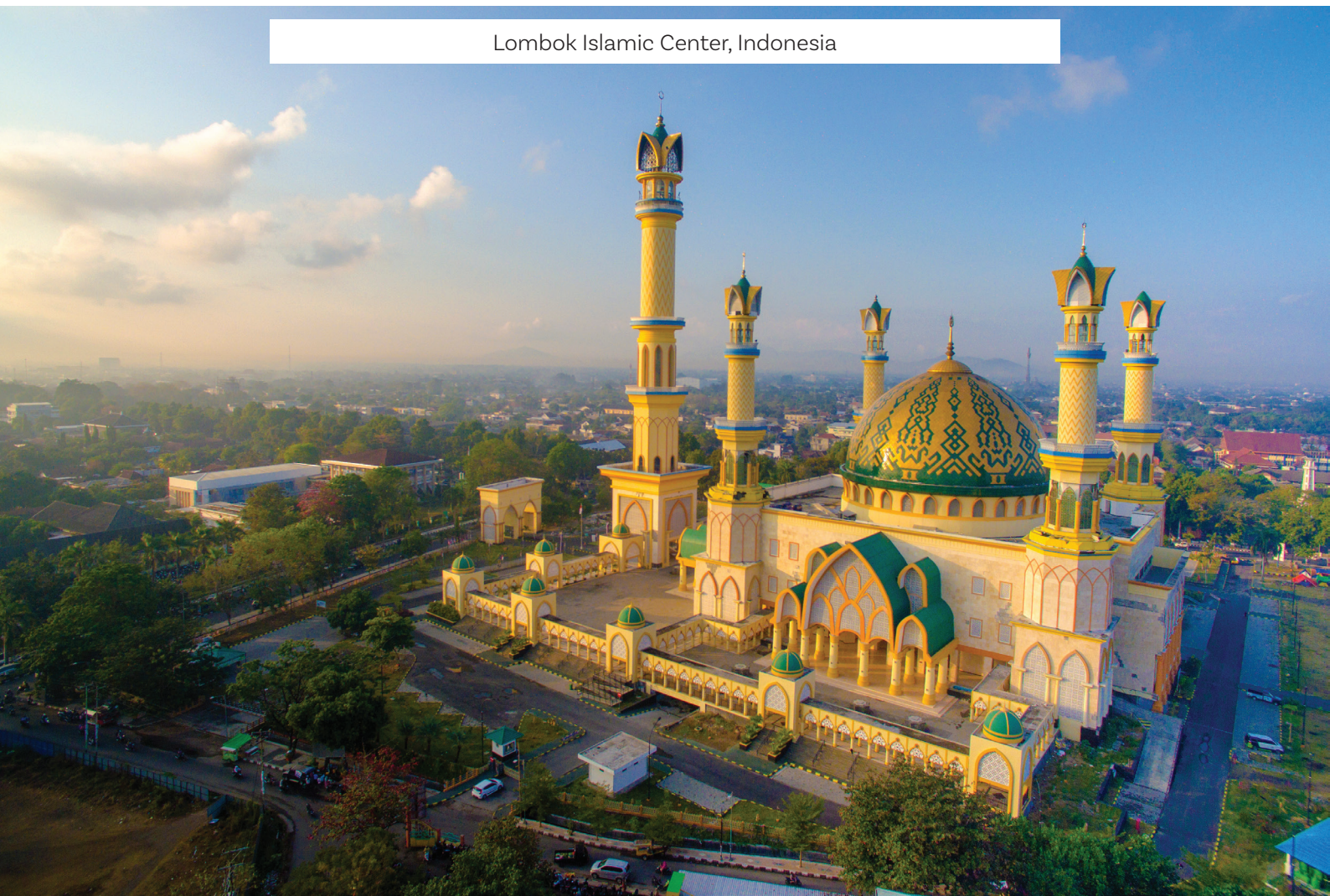
between the National University and the Peatland Restoration Agency (Badan Restorasi Gambut-BRG). Meetings were organized with villagers after evening prayers that were attended by imams and religious leaders. These gatherings emphasized the spiritual significance of refraining from setting the land on fire for personal gain, effectively raising awareness among the villagers. Previously, the villagers had chosen to burn peatlands for agricultural purposes, rather than rehabilitating them. This practice had contributed to Indonesia's escalating annual carbon emissions, given that peatlands are recognized for their capacity to retain carbon dioxide. The imam, by stating, "When we burn the land, we are not only burning trees but also small creatures, seen and unseen... All of these creatures are Allah's creations" (Rochmyaningsih, 2020), conveyed the importance of environmental stewardship to the congregation, urging them to honour the rights of other beings while improving the land. This exemplifies how religious references within environmental movements, as demonstrated by the imam's message, can yield successful outcomes.

## The Institute for Disaster Management and Climate Change (LPBI-NU)

Nahdlatul Ulama, a Java-based organization in Indonesia, emphasizes allegiance to the four Sunni jurisprudential schools and aims to preserve traditional religious values. Its primary objectives include disseminating religious education, nurturing traditional culture, and fostering social justice by protecting the poor and orphans. The movement is also concerned with environmental issues (Göksoy, 2006). Nahdlatul Ulama has issued "green fatwas" on various topics, including the harms of illegal hunting, the environmental impact of burning and sinking fishing vessels, the excessive destruction of nature, maintaining ecological balance in land conversions, adhering to religious rules in the import and export of animals, combating plastic waste, and promoting the production and use of renewable energy (Mufid, 2020).

In 2015, the Institute for Disaster Management and Climate Change (LPBI-NU) was established under the umbrella of Nahdlatul Ulama. The organization's goal

Lombok Islamic Center, Indonesia



is to address environmental issues across Indonesia from an Islamic perspective, providing solutions and informing its members about the causes of pollution and potential remedies. To achieve this, the institute arranges seminars, panels, and public meetings to raise awareness among the public. The engagement of an organization like Nahdlatul Ulama, which places importance on traditional religious education, in addressing environmental problems and issuing fatwas that highlight the religious incorrectness of actions harming the environment, exemplifies a practical manifestation of Islamic environmentalism.

On January 18, 2022, LPBI-NU convened a meeting in Tegal, where discussions revolved around increasing reforestation efforts, combating climate change, and providing urgent response to disasters (Ryan SR, 2022). Furthermore, from June 2-4, 2023, they organized a coordination meeting in Depok titled “The New Paradigm of Spiritual Ecology as a Driver for Disasters and Climate Change”. During this event, the hosting school’s students were encouraged to take responsibility in proposing solutions for environmental issues, emphasizing the significance of all Muslims viewing the protection of the universe as a religious duty (Kajis, 2023).

## Conclusion

Islamic environmentalism is rooted in the core principles of religion. What sets it apart from secular environmental movements is precisely this foundation. Muslims, regardless of their social, economic, or political context, endeavour to protect the world entrusted to them by Allah with a deep sense of stewardship. However, the full potential of this perspective has not yet been comprehended by secular environmental organizations or governmental bodies engaged in this domain. By harnessing the potential of Islamic environmentalism, it becomes evident that novel and sustainable solutions can be developed for environmental challenges on both individual and global scales.

Indonesia holds great significance within the Muslim world due to its attributes like having the largest Muslim population, abundant natural resources, diverse ecosystems, and a strategically advantageous geographical position. If it can formulate an environmentally sensitive development model and heighten environmental awareness among its Muslim citizens, it has the potential to become a role model

for other Muslim nations. Initiatives like Nahdlatul Ulama and its subsidiary, the Institute for Disaster Management and Climate Change (LPBI-NU), have the capacity to serve as examples for Muslim NGOs by motivating introspection, inspiring action, and advocating personal responsibility among Muslims to tackle environmental issues.

## References

- Dewayati, A., & Saat, N. (2020). Islamic Organizations and Environmentalism in Indonesia. *ISEAS Perspective*, 117(2020), 1-9. [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_117.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_117.pdf)
- Foltz, R. C. (2006). *Islam*. In R. S. Gottlieb (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (pp. 207-220). Oxford University Press.
- Göksoy, İ. H. (2006). *Nehdatü'l-Ulemâ. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 32, İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları.
- Hamed, S. (1993). Seeing the Environment Through Islamic Eyes: Application of Shariah to Natural Resources Planning and Management. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 6(2), 145-164. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF01965481>
- Hancock, R. (2018). *Islamic Environmentalism: Activism in the United States and Great Britain*. Routledge.
- Kajis Oleh. (2023). *Gelar Rapat Koordinasi Nasional, LPBI NU, Jadikan al-Hamidiyah Sebagai Tuan Rumah*. Yayasan Islam Al-Hamidiyah, 04 Juni 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.al-hamidiyah.sch.id/read/news/2023/06/gelar-rapat-koordinasi-nasional-lpbi-nu-jadikan-al-hamidiyah-sebagai-tuan-rumah.html>
- Keskin, N. (2022a). *Yeni Toplumsal Hareketler Bağlamında Din ve Çevrecilik: İslami Çevre Hareketleri*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Marmara University.
- Keskin, N. (2022b). *Toplumsal Hareket Olarak İslamî Çevreciliğe Genel Bir Bakış ve “Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)” Örneği*. *Müslüman Dünyadan Fikrî Birikimler*, October 2022. Retrieved from [https://ilke.org.tr/images/yayin/mdfb\\_22\\_yayin.pdf](https://ilke.org.tr/images/yayin/mdfb_22_yayin.pdf)
- Keskin, N. (2023). *Temel Kavramları ve Önemli Kampanyalarıyla İslamî Çevrecilik*. *Sürdürülebilir Çevre Dergisi*, 3(1), 13-23. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/cevder/issue/78365/1309680>
- Mangunjaya, F. M., & Prahawati, G. (2019). *Fatwas on Boosting Environmental Conservation in Indonesia*. *Religions*, 10(570), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10100570>
- Mufid, M. (2020). *Green Fatwas in Bahtsul Masa'il: Nahdlatul Ulama's Response to the Discourse of Environmental Crisis in Indonesia*. *Al-Ihkam Jurnal Hukum dan Pranata Sosial*, 15(2), 173-200. <https://doi.org/10.19105/al-ihkam.v15i2.3956>
- Rochmyaningsih, D. (2020, March 12). *The Muslim Cleric Preaching for Indonesia's Peat. Future Planet*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200311-can-green-islams-environmental-fatwas-help-climate-change>
- Ryan, S. R. (2022, January 18). *LPBPI Nu Kabupaten Tegal, Satuka Komitmen Untuk Pengabdian Masyarakat*. *Nutegal*. Retrieved from <https://nutegal.or.id/lpbbi-nu-kabupaten-tegal-satuka-komitmen-untuk-pengabdian-masyarakat/>

# How Will Climate Change Affect the Future of Humanitarian Aid?



**Talha Keskin**

Coordinator of International Relations,  
IHH Foundation.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg57>

Since the Second World War, humanitarian aid organizations have been increasingly active on the international stage in responding to various crises. While these institutions continue their efforts to protect and save human lives, they are also adapting to the evolving developments of the changing world. As some trends that aid organizations need to adapt to or perhaps even shape have faded over time, others persistently endure and continue to set the agenda.

The most influential turning point that has shaped the agenda of humanitarian actors in the last decade was the World Humanitarian Summit organized in Istanbul by the UN OCHA in 2016, under the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Following the summit, along with the released declaration, various agendas such as localization, the “nexus” between humanitarian aid, development, and peace, permanently transformed the priorities of humanitarian actors.

Although climate change and environmental issues found a place in one of the seven roundtable discussions during the summit, the prevailing focus during the time of the summit was more on conflicts. This situation impacted the agendas, goals, and core responsibilities outlined as a result of the summit. This circumstance is not unique to the 2016 UN Summit but has been an ongoing reality for a considerable time, as highlighted by Hugo Slim (Slim, 2023), who notes that conflicts have long been shaping the thought processes and operational capacities of humanitarian actors. While these conflicts persist, there are also challenges arising from the humanitarian security threats caused by the climate crisis. This situation has led actors engaged in humanitarian aid activities to not only address issues stemming from political conflicts but also to attend to regions affected by the climate crisis.

## Climate Crisis: Unfolding as a Humanitarian Emergency

In our present juncture, climate change, environmental impact, and sustainability concerns are preoccupying humanitarian aid entities like never before, with this trend expected to amplify further in the future. As outlined in the Global Humanitarian Overview, climate change is provoking humanitarian





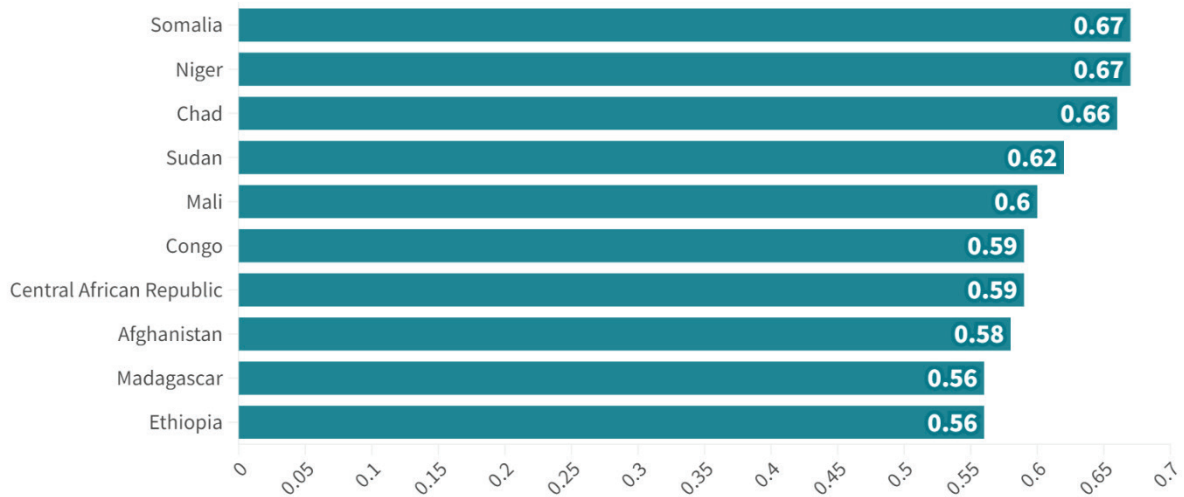
crises on a global scale. In response to the climate crisis, international humanitarian interventions are already active in 12 out of the 15 most vulnerable countries. The far-reaching repercussions of climate change span from human health to ecological domains. Notably, the report anticipates that by the close of this century, deaths stemming from extreme heat could parallel those arising from all cancer and infectious diseases combined (OCHA, 2023).

According to Save The Children, the climate crisis ranks as the leading cause of humanitarian need in the year 2023. Around 1.2 billion children are at risk of being affected by climate-related illnesses (“The Top 5 Trends Driving Humanitarian Need”, 2023). The impact of climate change, particularly rising temperatures, on children is highly perilous. Elevated temperatures signify reduced food security, increased consumption of contaminated water, lower income, and worsened health conditions for millions of families. Due to their still-developing immune systems, children are more vulnerable to pollution and diseases compared to adults. The destruction of homes, schools, and childcare centres due to crises negatively affects children’s physical and mental well-being (Climate Change Is a Grave Threat to Children’s Survival, n.d). According to the United Nations, millions of families will be forced to choose between hunger and migration (World Faces ‘Climate Apartheid’ Risk, 2019). As the devastating

impacts of the climate crisis become evident, these days provide significant insights for humanitarian actors to swiftly identify areas of focus.

The disasters stemming from climate change contribute to an increase in human rights violations, disruptions to livelihoods, heightened displacement, disease spread, deterioration of global public health, and, in general, a greater risk of humanitarian crises leading to loss of life. For instance, in 2021, over sixty percent of newly recorded internal displacements (23.7 million people) were triggered by disasters. Individuals who had previously become refugees due to conflicts are now confronted with the impacts of the climate crisis upon returning to their countries and lands, compounding their existing vulnerabilities alongside the aftermath of conflicts. In the year 2021, nearly all the individuals who had returned to their lands after conflicts were citizens of countries most severely threatened by climate-induced crises. This situation significantly complicates the attainment of secure and sustainable solutions within these countries (The Climate Crisis Is a Humanitarian Crisis, 2022).

For humanitarian actors operating globally, it is crucial to understand the risks their active countries are facing. Out of the 53 countries where the Humanitarian Response Plan is in action, 30 are under significant threat due to the impacts of climate change. When evaluating the adverse effects of climate change in



**Figure 1.** Most Vulnerable Countries in Climate Change Mitigation, 2022

**Source:** OCHA

terms of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, the most vulnerable countries emerge as depicted in Figure 1 below (OCHA, 2022).

Humanitarian actors should prepare for the future by drawing lessons from the past and leveraging their accumulated experiences. While the knowledge gained from past experiences with disasters could prove valuable in addressing certain crises in the future, it is also important to acknowledge that when it comes to climate change, we are venturing into the unknown. ALNAP categorizes disasters into three groups in their report titled “Adapting Humanitarian Action to the Effects of Climate Change”: “knowns,” “partially understood,” and “unknowns.” While it might be reasonable to assume that past experiences could be beneficial for dealing with “known” disasters that recur, it’s not difficult to imagine that these experiences might not be as effective for “partially understood” and “unknown” disasters (Geoffroy et al., 2021).

## Humanitarian Aid Initiatives and their Environmental Implications

The relationship between humanitarian aid missions, which aim to save lives and alleviate suffering, and

the environment has not received significant attention until recent times. However, in the present day, like in every other field, assessing and mitigating the negative environmental impacts of humanitarian actors is a goal. Moreover, the integration of the “environment” aspect into humanitarian intervention programs is a primary objective. Considering the environmental consequences in the initial stages of an emergency can be beneficial in understanding the causes of a crisis or disaster, reducing risks, and preventing their recurrence.

Ensuring the upfront planning of waste management following humanitarian interventions is essential to safeguarding the air, water, and soil, thereby preventing any detrimental effects on the health and hygiene conditions of communities impacted by crises. Additionally, the preservation of natural resources plays a pivotal role in maintaining the livelihoods of these communities. Employing risk-reducing and preventive interventions can effectively minimize the impact of future shocks, thereby mitigating the harm experienced by individuals (Environment and Humanitarian Action, n.d). In line with this, the semi-official “Humanitarian Aid and Environment Collaboration Network”, known as the EHA Network, has been operational since 2014, dedicated to addressing the convergence of humanitarian aid efforts and environmental considerations (About EHA, n.d).

## Recommendations for Humanitarian Actors in the Context of Climate Change

Humanitarian aid actors should possess the capacity to devise and execute programs encompassing resilience enhancement, disaster risk reduction, and proactive interventions for comprehensive and effective responses. Given that climate change crises contain numerous uncertainties, flexibility at the individual, program, and organizational levels is essential for navigating the unknown. Collaborating with development organizations and governmental authorities active in conflict-affected regions, humanitarian actors can implement programs addressing both conflict and climate-related challenges. In the imminent future, discussions within humanitarian endeavours will increasingly revolve around topics such as environmental impact, sustainability, carbon emissions, recycling, plastic credits, climate change, and global warming. Organizations that equip themselves for the future will gain a competitive advantage.

## References

Climate Change Is a Grave Threat to Children's Survival. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/climate-change>.

de Geoffroy, V., Grunewald, F., Bhatt, M., & Knox Clarke, P. (2021). Adapting Humanitarian Action to the Effects of Climate Change: An ALNAP Lessons Paper. Retrieved from <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/alnap-lessons-paper-adapting-humanitarian-action-to-the-effects-of-climate-change>.

***In the imminent future, discussions within humanitarian endeavours will increasingly revolve around topics such as environmental impact, sustainability, carbon emissions, recycling, plastic credits, climate change, and global warming.***

---

Environment and Humanitarian Action. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/topics/environment-humanitarian-action>.

Hugo, A. (2023). Humanitarians and the Climate Emergency: The Ethical, Practice, and Cultural Challenges. Retrieved from <https://gppi.net/2023/06/28/humanitarians-and-the-climate-emergency>.

OCHA. (2022). Global Humanitarian Overview 2023: Annual Report. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2023-mid-year-updatesnapshot-18-june-2023>.

The Climate Crisis Is a Humanitarian Crisis. (2022). Retrieved from <https://humanitarianaction.info/article/climate-crisis-humanitarian-crisis>.

The Top 5 Trends Driving Humanitarian Need in 2023. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/trends-driving-humanitarian-need>.

World Faces "Climate Apartheid" Risk. (2019). Retrieved from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/06/1041261>.

# Dr. Husna Ahmad's Perspective on Environmental Ethics



**Ceyda Bostanci**

Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul University.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg58>

The climate crisis, a problem that primarily has been caused by the developed countries, largely affects developing or less developed nations. Every year, budget discussions, climate change adaptation, and technology transfer issues are debated to address the damages caused by the climate crisis in the developing countries.

Since the 1990s, in these ongoing debates, the principle of “sustainable development” and the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”, based on the justice on environmental issues, have been adopted. As the discourse for achieving environmental justice evolves, the way Muslim communities approach environmental ethics and justice becomes increasingly crucial. Dr. Husna Ahmad has made a significant contribution to Islamic ecological studies by introducing fresh perspectives that emphasize the integration of environmental ethics, belief systems, and the role of women within Muslim societies. Husna Ahmad, the founder of the civil society organization Global One and the Secretary-General of the World Muslim Leadership Forum, serves as the coordinator for the Alliance of NGOs in South-South Cooperation (ANSSC), a collaboration between the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and various South-South Cooperation NGOs. With a history of diverse roles within civil society organizations, Dr. Ahmad also holds the position of Co-Chair of the Interfaith Advisory Council of the United Nations’ Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development. She is also a board member of “Faith in Water, Faith for the Climate” and the Palmers Green Mosque (The MCEC).

Husna Ahmad’s contributions stand out from other ecological writings due to her distinctive “faith-centred” approach. However, her approach goes beyond merely advocating for a belief-based environmental ethic; she emphasizes the integration of faith and women. This is evident through her organization, Global One, where she leads campaigns addressing crises faced by women and children. This holistic perspective underscores her dedication to driving meaningful change by considering both faith and gender dynamic

In Husna Ahmad’s view, the discourse on environment and ecology encompasses crucial principles: development eco-consciousness, purification, and



sustenance. Rooted in Islamic tradition, Ahmad endeavours to construct her environmental perspective by associating these principles with contemporary relevance. By examining these facets, she draws parallels between Hazrat Khadijah’s struggle for water accessibility and Hazrat Yusuf’s response to scarcity, contextualizing them within present-day challenges.

Dr. Ahmad formulates the “eco-consciousness” perspective by intricately weaving the notions of sustenance and purification. Her ultimate objective is to revitalize the perception of security within Muslim societies and reshape their approach to environmental concerns, utilizing this perspective as a catalyst for change.

## **Continuity of Faith and Purification: Water and Islam**

The defining word that best characterizes the author is “awareness.” Describing the significance of the relationship between water and Islam, the author positions it within Islamic teachings and emphasizes that water is fundamentally necessary for both physical and spiritual purification. The author aims to raise awareness among women about the

intersection of climate change and water scarcity, employing the metaphor of Hagar (Hajjar) and her connection to water—an essential element in Muslims’ lives and worship. In pursuit of these goals, Dr. Husna Ahmad authored a promotional pamphlet titled “Islam and Water: The Hajar (ra) Story and Guide.” The pamphlet focuses on Hagar’s journey in the desert, highlighting her unwavering surrender to Allah during her time of hardship. Drawing from Hagar’s spirit of submission in the desert, the author addresses Muslim women, emphasizing that awareness is rooted in being content with “Allah’s actions.”

The author highlights three critical points in Hagar’s story and asserts that this narrative is the “story of the continuity of faith.” Secondly, water serves as a crucial source for sustaining human life. Thirdly, the author emphasizes the incorporation of women’s actions in the continuity of faith (Obe, 2011, p. 7). According to Ahmad, contentment is intertwined with continuity. The execution of an action should occur “within the continuity of faith,” regardless of whether it pertains to the past, present, or future. The continuity of faith brings about a sense of temporal wholeness. As a result, the author illustrates how Muslim communities can connect these narratives

to various stages of human societal life, emphasizing that they remain central.

The author delves into the importance of conserving water due to the prevalent water scarcity. The present-day reality of 1.1 billion people lacking access to clean water is starkly presented by the author. Furthermore, the tragic toll of 1.5 million children's lives lost annually due to insufficient clean water and hygiene is highlighted, making a poignant case for Muslims to take up the responsibility of ensuring safe water access (Obe, 2011, p. 11).

In addition, the author draws attention to the powerful lesson from Hagar's pursuit of the Zamzam well, asserting that this lesson reaches beyond Muslim women to resonate with women globally. This narrative's significance is underscored as a story from which all can learn (Obe, 2011, p. 7).

Dr. Husna Ahmad introduces a novel perspective on environmental issues by placing women's beliefs at the core of ecological challenges. She articulates how women, guided by the narrative of Hagar and water, can offer distinct responses to environmental issues, offering an innovative outlook on environmental concerns.

## **Rizq: Islamic Agriculture and Protective Farming**

Dr. Husna Ahmad examines how our contemporary agricultural practices can be reinterpreted from an Islamic perspective. By doing so, she facilitates a reconsideration of sustainable development, a prevalent approach today, through the lens of Islam. In collaboration with The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and Global One, she has prepared a work titled "An Islamic Agriculture Toolkit for Protective Farming". This project delves into the norms and practices of Islamic agriculture, offering a comprehensive exploration in partnership with these organizations.

Ahmad underlines that many practices in today's sustainable agriculture have their origins in the Islamic agricultural revolution but points out that these practices have been lost in Muslim societies. She questions the need for a faith-centred agricultural perspective in our current world (Obe, n.d., p. 8). According to Husna Ahmad, the success of the

Islamic agricultural revolution was influenced by four key approaches: organizing land management according to Islamic principles, innovative irrigation methods, enhanced agricultural techniques, and the introduction of new crops (Obe, 2015, p. 12). At the heart of these practices lies the concept of sustenance (rizq). According to the author, the concept of sustenance differs from that of a mere gift (hiba), emphasizing its correlation with human actions and submission to Allah (Obe, 2015, p. 19).

The author indicates that the management of scarcity and abundance, as exemplified in the story of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf), serves as an agricultural management model. Within this agricultural management model, the concept of sustenance (rizq) prominently manifests as a norm. In this narrative, the periods of scarcity and abundance, equitable distribution, and sharing, alongside actions of preservation, take the centre stage. Drawing from this story, the author explains that when providing sustenance to communities, Allah expects individuals to engage in five actions: mindfulness (takva), reliance (tevekkül), prayer (namaz), repentance (tövbe), and charitable giving (infak). Guided by these principles, the author proposes the enhancement of Islamic agricultural practices. In her work titled "An Islamic Agriculture Toolkit for Protective Farming," she discusses avenues that encompass the planning of the agricultural process to the market release of the product.

## **The Age of Eco-Consciousness: Green Hajj**

Dr. Husna Ahmad underscores the importance of ecological sensitivity in the actions of Muslims, emphasizing the need for steps towards promoting a "Green Hajj". According to her perspective, it is crucial to raise awareness among pilgrims about key issues such as transportation, waste management, and consumption during the Hajj season, contributing to a deeper understanding of the pilgrimage's essence (Green Prophet, 2011). Stemming from this viewpoint, Dr. Ahmad has meticulously crafted a resource named the "Green Guide to the Hajj" aimed at guiding pilgrims and travellers to adopt ecologically responsible practices during their Hajj and Umrah journeys.

Describing the Hajj season as a period of “eco-consciousness,” Ahmad highlights that it presents an ideal opportunity for individuals to establish a meaningful connection with the environment (Green Prophet, 2011). The author also suggests that during the pilgrimage, recalling the story of Hajar can serve as a valuable reminder, urging Muslim communities to form a “conscious-awareness” centred approach to responsibility, as they navigate the intricate relationship between belief and the environment.

## Resources

- Global One (n.d.). Empower Women and Girls. <https://globalone.org.uk/dignity-kits/>
- Green Prophet (2011,). Interview With Green Hajj Expert Husna Ahmed. <https://www.greenprophet.com/2011/11/interview-hajj-husna-ahmed/>
- Moussa, N. K. (n.d.) Re-examining the Islamic agriculture revolution.
- Obe, H. A. (2011). Islam and Water the Hajjar (r.a.) Story and Guide.
- Obe, H. A. (2015). *Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Agriculture*. UK: ARC and Global One.

The background is a vibrant green with various shades and patterns. It features stylized leaves in white, dark blue, and light green. There are also white wavy lines representing water. The text is centered in a bold, dark blue font.

**GREEN INITIATIVES  
OF MUSLIM  
ENVIRONMENTALISTS**



## Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)

**Country:** United Kingdom **Type:** NGO **Established:** 1980



This institution, which has been developing an Islamic perspective on environmental issues since the 1980s, has gained international recognition in this field. Based in the United Kingdom, this organization conducts activities related to Islamic environmental ethics through pioneering figures such as Fazlun Khalid, Muzammal Hüseyin, and Harfiyah Haleem. It endeavours to empower Muslim communities to assume the role of environmental “custodians”. Its aim is to promote environmental awareness through green mosque projects and plastic-free iftar programs. It collaborates strongly with municipalities and produces social projects among the Muslim community in the United

Kingdom. The institution, which aims to spread the Eco-Islam perspective, met with British and Irish Muslims at the COP26 Climate Conference and issued a joint statement.

<https://www.ifees.org.uk/>

---

## Green Muslims

**Country:** USA **Type:** NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) **Established:** 2007



Green Muslims, originally a small community that came together in Washington, has evolved into an organization dedicated to promoting an Islamic-based environmental awareness today. Currently operating as a non-governmental organization, it aims to raise awareness about global environmental issues affecting Muslims and conducts work on how faith-based efforts should be made in the face of environmental challenges.

The organization aims to instill environmental consciousness in Muslim communities with the slogan “Our deen green”. Sustainable daily programs are prepared for the month of Ramadan. They have initiated a project called “Green Sacred Scriptures” to interpret the relationship between the Quran and nature and to understand responsibilities towards the environment based on Islamic tradition.

<https://www.greenmuslims.org/>

---

## Groene Moslims

**Country:** Netherlands **Type:** Movement



Based in the Netherlands, this movement has embraced the mission of being the “Green Muslim Community” and has made the climate crisis a primary concern. To raise awareness about the climate crisis, they organize discussions titled “Green Topics Gatherings” in collaboration with experts. They also invite companies and individuals they are inspired by through their green actions and conduct workshops. They have initiated an event called “Green Iftar” based on the question, “Where does the climate crisis fit into our iftars?” Additionally, they are running the “Clothing Cycle” project to reduce the carbon footprint of the fashion industry, where they engage in second-hand clothing exchange through Facebook. Another area where they want to increase awareness is

gardening and agriculture. The movement aims to have a shared (urban) garden with the “Jannah” (Paradise) project, where Muslims can plant, work, and harvest together.

<https://www.groenemoslims.nl/>

---

## Wisdom in Nature

**Country:** United Kingdom **Type:** Organization **Established:** 1990



Formerly known as the “London Islamic Network for the Environment” and now known as “Wisdom in Nature”, this organization is an activist group in the United Kingdom that focuses on environmental issues. Starting as a small group of three individuals, the movement recognized the need for environmental awareness and began discussing various inclusive issues through quarterly meetings, ranging from green economics to food and agriculture in Palestine. The founder of the organization, Muzammal Hussain, offers a new approach to the environment. Members of Wisdom in Nature introduce themselves as “eco-jihadis”. This network includes not only Muslims but also members from different faith groups. It aims to create a new understanding of environmentalism based on Islamic principles. With this perspective, the organization organizes workshops and public meetings on Islamic ecology and produces publications.

<https://www.wisdominnature.org/>

---

## Green Initiative by ISNA/ Islamic Society of North America

**Country:** USA **Type:** Movement **Established:** 1963



This initiative was initiated by the North American Islamic community based in the USA. The movement aims to address current issues with a Muslim American identity, and it argues that environmental crises are also the primary responsibility of Muslims. Based on these goals, the organization launched the “ISNA Green Mosque Project”. This project aims to build mosques that prioritize women and the environment. They are working to make the mosques environmentally friendly and sustainable. Their goal is to reduce energy, water, and operational costs in more than 2,700 mosques and 300 school buildings. With this project, they aim

to make public spaces more environmentally friendly and raise awareness among Muslim communities. During Interfaith Climate Action Week, they collaborate with various Islamic environmental groups and organize events.

<https://isna.net/isna-green-initiative/>

---

## Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment (ShINE)

**Country:** United Kingdom **Type:** Movement



The movement that began in the city of Sheffield in the United Kingdom is inspired by Islamic traditions and works towards organizing daily practices in accordance with both the environment and religion. The Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment (ShINE) embraces a commitment to Islamic teachings and environmental awareness principles. The movement

organizes activities such as regional garbage collection days. In fact, its members refer to themselves as “nefers.” Embracing cleanliness as a fundamental principle in Islamic tradition, the movement states that removing litter from the streets is a Muslim’s primary duty. The movement’s new goals include organizing seminars in mosques and community centers to raise awareness about environmental issues through these events. Another objective is to establish connections and networks with various environmental movements.

<https://www.theecomuslim.co.uk/2011/10/shine-sheffields-muslim.html>

---

## Ecological Curriculum Muslim Hands

**Country:** United Kingdom **Type:** Organization **Established:** 1993



The movement that began in Nottingham in 1993 was influenced by the devastation brought about by the Bosnian War and embarked on a journey to address the societal and international problems faced by Muslim communities. Muslim Hands, which has now evolved into an international organization, is opening schools and health clinics in various parts of the world and creating livelihood programs. It operates in more than 20 countries, assisting those affected by poverty, conflict, and natural disasters. The organization conducts research on the root causes of poverty worldwide and initiates projects to address the pressing issue of “access to clean water”. It has opened more than 1000 water wells and provided safe water to over 2.6 million people. Through the “Water for Yemen” project, it has

raised funds for the Yemeni community, ensuring safe access to water for 3 million people living in Aden and Ma’rib.

<https://muslimhands.org.uk/home>

---

## MENA Youth Network

**Country:** Tunisia **Type:** Institution



MENA Youth Network was founded by young people living in the Middle East and North Africa region who came together during the Youth4Climate event held in Milan in 2021. The network aims to promote the approaches of young people in the region on various social issues, including the environment, and to lead and encourage collaborations on projects across the region. Additionally, it seeks to raise awareness about the climate crisis among young people in the region. The organization not only centres its efforts on addressing the climate crisis but also actively examines the strategies for pursuing climate justice within Muslim communities, actively participating in climate advocacy initiatives. They organize workshops and seminars on sustainable agriculture systems and education. They have also launched the “Harvesting Hope”

campaign in collaboration with the World Food Forum, aiming to raise awareness about sustainable agriculture and enhance young people’s skills in this field through educational initiatives.

---

## Eco-mosque, Cambridge, UK

**Country:** United Kingdom **Type:** Initiative



This mosque, which focuses on sustainability and green energy, is the first eco-mosque in Europe. During the construction process of this mosque, both British culture and the principles of Islam were considered together. It is designed as a “peaceful oasis within a forest.” In the construction of the Cambridge Mosque, based on the eco-design concept, energy and water conservation are essential in the use and management of space.

The building is naturally illuminated throughout the year with large roof windows, supported by low-energy bulbs, and steps are taken to generate renewable energy. Graywater and rainwater are used to clean the toilets and irrigate the grounds. Green transportation is also taken into account in the design of this mosque. A spacious area is dedicated to bicycles, and pedestrian-friendly paths and an underground parking facility have been constructed for easy access.

---

## Earth Uprising International

**Country:** International **Type:** Initiative

Earth Uprising International is a global climate movement led by young people with the aim of transitioning to a fair economy. Operating in more than 40 countries, the movement is currently participating in events hosted by various global organizations, including the UN Parties Conference and the World Economic Forum, to present its perspectives. It engages in work within the international law and policy sphere, aiming to assess existing and new environmental laws and develop an approach to environmental cases. It advocates for the development of environmental policies and environmental law to achieve climate justice. To this end, it follows a volunteer policy that involves young people. It organizes campaigns with the Global Youth Leadership Council and provides leadership, awareness, and education to young people on the climate crisis.



It engages in work within the international law and policy sphere, aiming to assess existing and new environmental laws and develop an approach to environmental cases. It advocates for the development of environmental policies and environmental law to achieve climate justice. To this end, it follows a volunteer policy that involves young people. It organizes campaigns with the Global Youth Leadership Council and provides leadership, awareness, and education to young people on the climate crisis.

<https://earthuprising.org/>

---

## Ummah for Earth

“Ummah for Earth” is an initiative launched to collaborate with various individuals and institutions to address the economic and social crises brought about by climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations such as Global One, Greenpeace MENA, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, IFEES/EcoIslam, and Islamic Relief are some of the organizations within the Ummah for Earth alliance network. Ummah for Earth strives to develop sustainable and green programs in various areas, from holidays to pilgrimage, from technology to daily life, in alignment with the understanding that Islam sees humanity as stewards of the Earth.

<https://ummah4earth.org/en/>

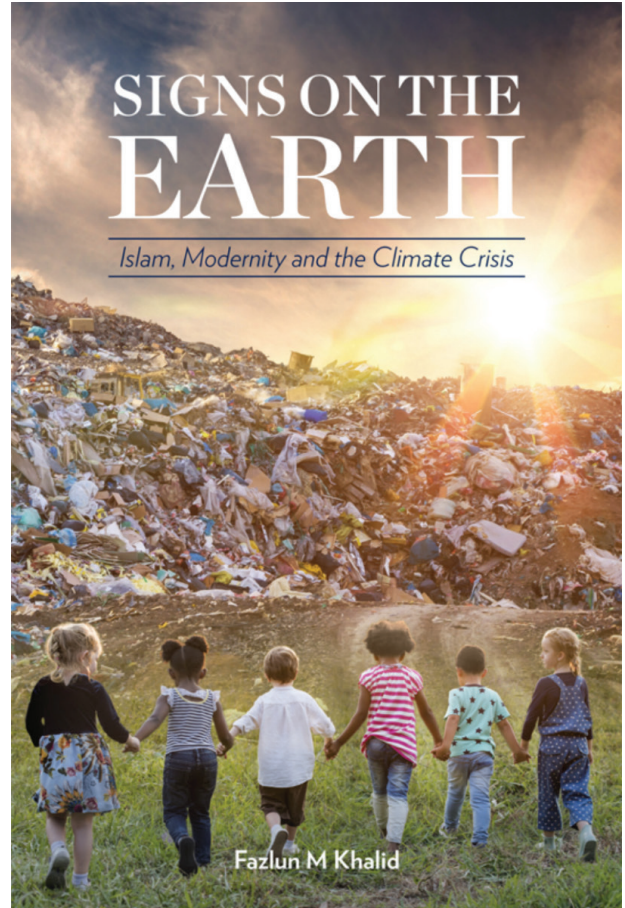
---

# Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis



**Ayşe Aykanat**

Undergraduate Student, Boğaziçi University, Department of Elementary Education



Khalid, F. (2019). *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*. Kube Publishing.

Fazlun Khalid, a British eco-theologian of Sri Lankan origin born in 1932, is generally concerned with Islamic environmental ethics and issues related to Islam and ecology. He has conveyed his insights to readers through his works, “Guardians of the Natural Order” and *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*.

He has lectured on Islamic environmentalism in various places such as the United Nations, Davos, and the Vatican. He has been described as the “most active Islamic environmentalist alive today” by Nova Science. In 2008, he was listed among the top 100 environmentalists in the United Kingdom by Independent on Sunday and was also recognized among the 500 most influential Muslims. Currently, he serves as the Founding Director of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES).

The goal of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science is to create a comprehensible doctrine for the environment by drawing from the Quran and Hadith literature. The book *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis* discusses research and arguments produced in this direction. The author raises the question, “Is it possible to change our relationship with the environment by drawing from ancient texts and teachings?” and presents an environmental perspective within the framework of Islam, utilizing Islamic sources to convey an environmental discourse to the present day. The author emphasizes that Islam takes a holistic approach to existence, not distinguishing between the spiritual and worldly realms, and as a result, it does not exempt nature from human responsibility. The Quran charges humans with a responsibility toward the ecosystems they inhabit. Islam regulates one’s relationship with nature by showing their place and responsibilities within the natural order. While it may not explicitly state “Protect the trees,” it guides individuals to act in a way that includes protecting trees as part of their environmental responsibilities. Therefore, the author asserts, “Islam is environmentalism.”

In his book centered around the concept of Islamic environmentalism, the author takes a critical stance against consumer culture and the exploitation of natural resources. According to the author, modernization, the industrial revolution, and globalization have disrupted natural systems and led to the commodification of the environment, damaging humanity’s relationship with the world. The deepening environmental crisis, according to the author, should remind Muslims of Islam’s rich ecological

teachings, and he emphasizes that Islam possesses important principles for the environment that are relevant to all of humanity.

The book consists of six chapters with various sub-headings. In the introductory chapters of the book, a historical perspective on consumption, capitalism, and the exploitation of natural resources is presented, addressing related problems. Under the title “A Broken World,” the focus is on issues such as species extinction, biodiversity, potential species extinctions, and pollution. Concepts like happiness, good living, hope, and sustainable development are discussed under the heading “Welfare Perspective.” *Islam and the Natural World* delves into Islamic environmental principles. Overall, the chapters of the book convey specific concepts and principles in light of historical perspectives.

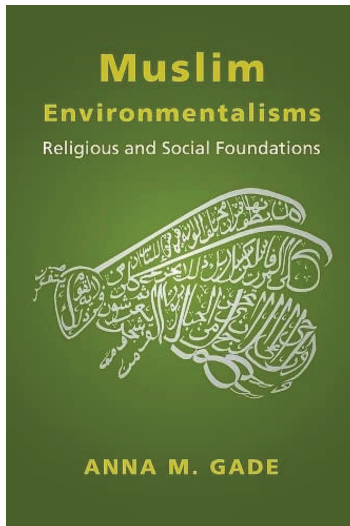
Khalid fundamentally criticizes capitalism, asserting that the primary cause of natural resource exploitation is a political economy that fuels consumer culture. He suggests transitioning from an unlimited economic growth perspective to a circular economy model.

The author’s development of a critical view of the political economic system and his detailed and applicable presentation of Islamic environmental teachings in the book highlight its unique aspect. Presenting Islam’s perspective on the environment and its principles as a prescription for all of humanity may empower Muslims to take a leading role in environmental issues. In this regard, the book constitutes a significant contribution to the environmental contributions made by Muslim communities.

# BOOKS

## ISLAM AND ENVIRONMENT



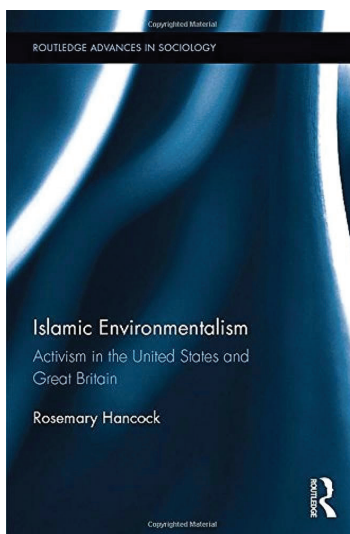


## Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations

Anna M. Gade, Columbia University Press, 2019

Gade, in her exploration of the theme of “Muslim environmentalism,” questions the relationship between Islam and the environment. She investigates the historical roots of Islamic environmental justice and illustrates how this concept has been realized in the practices of Muslim societies, drawing from fieldwork in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The author presents multiple Islamic perspectives on environmentalism by comparing the practices of Muslim communities. In contrast to the objectification of the environment in environmental sciences and studies, she highlights that Islamic approaches view the environment as a subject. These Islamic approaches seek a reasonable understanding of the environment based on an ethical perspective rather than aiming to simply halt environmental crises, with the goal of contributing to the development of a global environmental ethics.

---



## Islamic Environmentalism: Activism in the United States and Great Britain

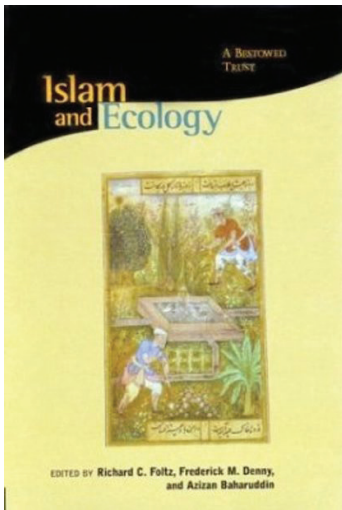
Rosemary Hancock, Routledge, 2017

In this book, Hancock examines the environmental consciousness of Muslims living in the United States and Great Britain. The author, while presenting the approaches of Muslims as environmental activists, emphasizes the need to research Muslim intellectuals and Islamic environmental organizations working in the field of Islamic environmentalism. She prepared this book based on the belief that there is a necessity to investigate these aspects.

During the years 2012-2013, Hancock conducted interviews with activists affiliated with environmental institutions and independent activists in the United States and Great Britain. Drawing from social movement theory, Hancock explores group culture in the context of the relationship between Muslim communities and the environment. She demonstrates that Muslims have been at the forefront of the fight against environmental crises and encourages us to reexamine the relationship between religion and the environment through emotions and identity connections.

---



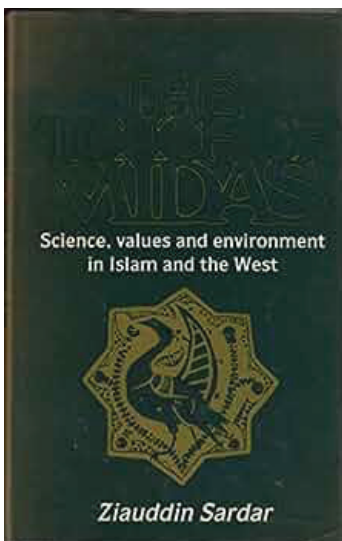


## Islam And Ecology: A Bestowed Trust

Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, Azizan Baharuddin,  
Harvard Divinity School, 2003

Prepared with contributions from many authors, including Ibrahim Özdemir and Seyid Hüseyin Nasr, this book examines the stance and approaches of Muslim communities towards environmental crises. The first part of the book discusses the connections between God, humans, and nature. In the second part, the relationship between Islam and the environment is examined from a scientific perspective. Starting from this relationship, the book explains the interest of the contemporary Islamic world in environmental crises within the framework of Islamic environmental law and concepts. The third part shares criticisms of modernism and concerns of Muslim communities regarding environmental issues. In the last two parts, the perspective of sustainable development, which is a dominant ideology today, is examined from an ethical standpoint, and the possibility of Islamic urbanism is discussed while redesigning the theme of the “Islamic city” through the metaphor of the “Islamic garden.”

---

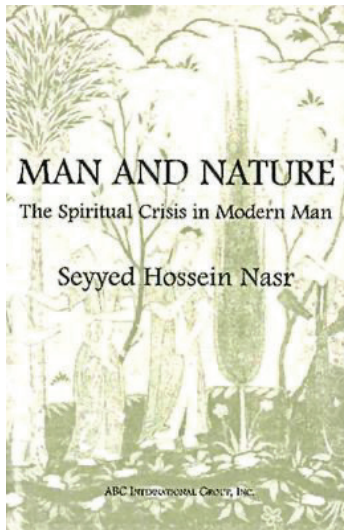


## The Touch Of Midas: Science, Values and Environment in Islam and the West

Ziauddin Sardar, Manchester University Press, 1984

The fundamental concern of this book, edited by Ziauddin Sardar, is whether there is a conflict between Islam and science. Sardar, who adopts a mystical understanding, derives the main theme of the book from the legendary story of King Midas of Phrygia. According to Sardar, contemporary science is experiencing the consequences of greed, much like the story of King Midas. Modern science is currently in crisis due to the lifestyle it promises. Therefore, there is a need to examine this crisis faced by science and humanity. The first two chapters of the book explore the relationship between science, the environment, and values, with these values being discussed around the Western and Islamic scientific traditions. In the final section, these values are compared, and the possibility of synthesizing the Western and Islamic scientific traditions is examined.

---

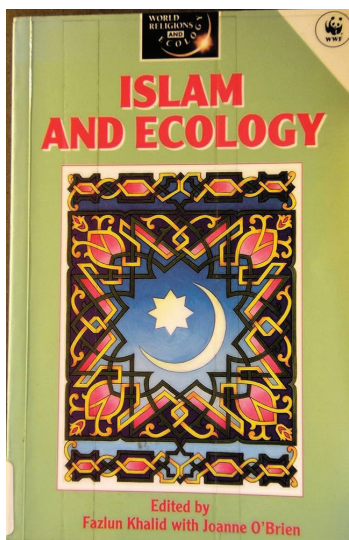


## The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, London: Allen and Unwin. 1968

Nasr, who is aware of the problems brought about by modern science, is of the opinion that the reasons for the encounter between man and nature should be questioned first. This confrontation has constructed the crises of modern humanity. The main causes of environmental crises, such as population growth and resource depletion, are attributed to humanity's belief that it can "subjugate nature." Today, not only Muslim societies but also the West are experiencing this crisis. He attributes this to humanity's construction of an "artificial environment" in its world. In the construction of this "artificial environment," not only economic issues but also the loss of spirituality in the relationship with nature have been effective. Nasr, who says, "There is no sacred aspect of nature left for contemporary man," believes that it is necessary to reestablish the relationship between man and nature against these circumstances that threaten and detain human existence.

---

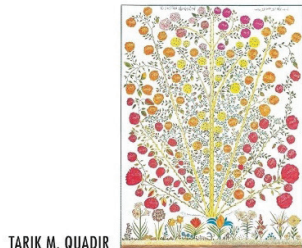
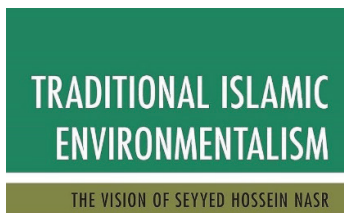


## Islam and Ecology

Fazlun Khalid & Joanne O'Brien, Cassell, 1992

In this book, Khalid and O'Brien argue that an Islamic perspective can offer a solution to ecological issues. They explain the relationship between Islam and the environment based on the Quran and Hadith, establishing a connection between scientific principles and Islamic values. In doing so, they create a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between Islam and ecology. The first section of the book addresses fundamental environmental issues such as the relationship between humanity and nature, Islam and ecology, and problems like air pollution. The second section explores environmental norms from an Islamic ethical standpoint and examines the thoughts of Muslim scholars regarding the use of environmental and natural resources. In the third section, they open a discussion on the relationship between Islam and science, as well as the concept of a science-based system rooted in reason, as advocated by Nasr and Serdar. In the final sections of the book, they provide examples of how Islamic law approaches environmental matters..

---



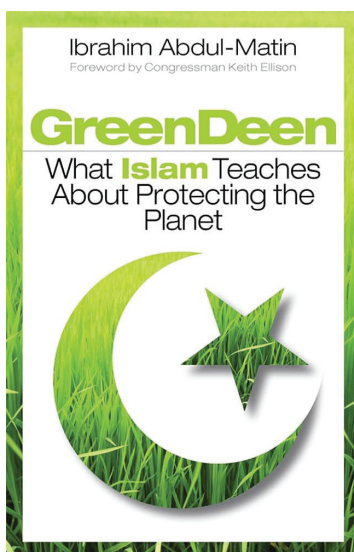
TARIK M. QUADIR

## Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Tarik M. Quadir, University press of America, 2013

Based on his thesis at the University of Birmingham, Quadir examines Seyyed Hossein Nasr's approach to the environmental crisis. He reintroduces the relationship between humans and the environment into our discourse through Nasr's perspective. Starting from this perspective, he evaluates traditional Islamic thought and practices regarding the environment. With this book, the author centralizes the relationship between humans, nature, and God once again and criticizes the modern understanding of science and technology. He opposes the technology-centered way of life and mainstream environmentalism, emphasizing the need for religious values in solving environmental problems. Quadir compares Nasr's approach to environmental crises with the understanding of Islamic environmentalists and finds Nasr's approach to be more traditional. According to the author, Nasr's solutions to environmental crises may be considered idealistic, but he emphasizes that Nasr presents noteworthy and realistic solutions.

---



## Green Deen: What Islam Teaches About Protecting The Planet

Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010

American Muslim environmental activist Abdul-Matin conceptualized the idea of the "Green Deen" inspired by his father's words, "The Earth is our mosque." According to Matin, Muslims have a special connection with the environment. Because of this connection, Islam not only serves as a global religion but also offers a path and way of life for individuals. He says that the purpose of writing the book is to highlight that being environmentally conscious and having an awareness of planet preservation are embedded in the traditions of Muslims. In this book, which is divided into sections on waste, energy, food, and water, he narrates the experiences of Muslims related to the environment rather than delving into Quranic stories or commentary interpretations. In the third section, he describes the pioneers and organizations that are promoting the Green Deen, thus emphasizing personal experiences. The author aims to create an environment-centered movement based on daily life practices through religious rituals. He believes that a "green" perspective is inherent in Islam. He also believes that the answers to the negative impacts of excessive consumption on human consciousness and how to respond to the concept of overconsumption align with the principles of Islam.

---

# Islamophobic Red: The Chinese Atrocities in East Turkistan



**Abdürreşid Eminhaci**

Secretary-General of International  
Union of East Turkistan Organizations  
(IUETO)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg59>

China, officially known as the People's Republic of China, is a country that emerged in 1949 in Eastern Asia. It covers a vast territory of 9,596,961 km<sup>2</sup>, and includes the regions of East Turkistan, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Taiwan. China operates with a political system based on communism, socialism, and one-party rule, under the Chinese Communist Party that holds exclusive legitimacy and power. The country promotes atheism, communism, materialism, and Chinese nationalism, and emphasizes Chinese civilization, and culture (ETHR, 2022).

An estimated 40-50 million Muslims live under China's control, comprising Hui Zu within China and Uyghurs, Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and others in occupied East Turkistan. Since China's occupation of East Turkistan in 1948, the region has faced massive and systematic assimilation policies, including cultural and language revolutions, arrests of elites, destruction of Islamic and cultural heritage, and forced Sinicization.

China has implemented assimilation policies under a colonial strategy in East Turkistan, aiming to alter the region's local elements and suppress resistance against assimilation and legitimization of its occupation. The strategic significance of East Turkistan to China lies in its energy reserves and its role as a gateway for the Belt and Road Initiative, a grand strategy pursued since 2013 (ETHR, 2022).

The Chinese main ideology, grand strategy, and colonization mission view any resistance to them as a threat to national interest, security, and the Chinese Dream (national goals). Islam, with its long history in East Turkistan, is deeply integrated with the region's cultural and national identity while the Muslim identity serves as a source of ideological and active resistance against Chinese colonization, Sinicization, and communism.

In conclusion, China's fear of Islam is rooted in its desire for identity assimilation, success of its grand strategy, and colonization of East Turkistan. This fear has led to Islamophobia at the national level against all Muslim communities in particular in East Turkistan to the extent of committing an alleged genocide there.

## Phobia of Chinese Dream

The Chinese Communist Party, under Mao Zedong's leadership, established the new China based on

communism, aiming to create a homogenous society with communist ideology and economy, atheism, and materialism. Religion, particularly Islam, was viewed as a threat to the party's hegemony, as it rejected communism and resisted autocracy. Islam also became an ideological base for resisting assimilation, integration, and colonization in East Turkistan. This historical background explains China's longstanding tense relationship with Islam and how it poses an obstacle to their policies of communization and Sinicization in East Turkistan (ETHR, 2022).

Despite some reforms after 1975, China continued to restrict Islamic education, Muslim identity, and Islamic studies in East Turkistan. Mosques had age and gender limitations; Islam was banned for children until 18. Muslim scholars and most of Imams were held in detention. Meanwhile, The Chinese government promoted atheism and demonized Islamic values and history. The first year of primary school starts with atheism and rejection of existence of God and all non-material ideology. In the third year, all students should become red scarf by promising to be non-religious. This anti-Islam environment created the Islamophobic elites, Islamophobic government officials, Islamophobic academics, Islamophobic teachers, Islamophobic civil servants, Islamophobic police, and Islamophobic doctors who already were the normal reality of the life in East Turkistan. This Islamophobic environment affected both Muslims and non-Muslims, fostering biased Islamophobic interpretations and assumptions, as well as the Islamophobic expectation and demands from government (Center for Uyghur Studies, 2023).

Islam, a powerful force for resisting assimilation, posed the biggest threat to China's colonization policy in East Turkistan. To make Islam more amenable to colonization, China altered Islamic texts and teachings about resistance. China was aiming to create a colonization friendly Islam. Western war on terrorism provided China with a better excuse to cover its Islamophobic crimes after 9\11, and China joined the war on terror but directed it specifically to East Turkistan against Muslims, using anti-terrorism and de-radicalization as new terms for their Islamophobic policies and discourses (Beydoun, K. A., & Crenshaw, K. 2023).

This fear of Islam persisted throughout China's 65 years of occupation of East Turkistan until 2013. In

that year, Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative, highlighting his concerns over the failure of assimilation efforts and the role of religion in maintaining Muslim identity separate from non-Muslim settlers and leadership. Despite 65 years of assimilation efforts, East Turkistan's people maintained their identity and resistance, largely thanks to Islam. This posed a significant threat to China's colonization policy and its grand strategy. Thus, Xi declared a war on terror in East Turkistan, identifying Islam as the main factor of terrorism (Luqiu, L. R., & Yang, F., 2018).

## Islamophobic Genocide

Throughout its history, East Turkistan has endured numerous massacres and oppressions, leading to a dearth of human rights and dignity under China's rule. However, the scale of genocide perpetrated by China on a global stage has shocked the world. According to the Uyghur tribunal, the rapid assimilation process, constituting genocide, began in East Turkistan after 2017, with preparations dating back to 2014. The genocide's facet tied to Islamophobia can be outlined as follows:

1. East Turkistan's vital geographical and political position, serving as a gateway for China's ambitious New Silk Road strategy towards Central Asia and Europe. The resistance of East Turkistan against assimilation over half a century imposes a threat to the success of the grand strategy that established everything on the bases of East Turkistan. This fear was the excuse of Xi and its central leadership to declare war in East Turkistan against terrorism and radical ideology in 2014 and announced the war mode in the region, and Islam was in the first place of the list as the most effective factor of resistance against all the Sinicization. "Islam equals Terrorism" framed by China (OHCHR, U. 2022).
2. This entailed establishing concentration camps, widespread arrests, destruction of mosques, burning of religious texts, and imposing bans on Islamic symbols. Atheism and Confucian ideologies were promoted in schools, while Islamic practices were restricted, and Muslim countries and leaders were vilified. From 2014 to 2023, over 16,000 mosques were demolished, Islamic worship was prohibited,

*Uyghur Turks Living in Istanbul Organized a Protest Against China's Persecution in East Turkestan.*

*Source: Anadolu Agency (AA)*



Imams, thinkers and even normal Muslim individuals were arrested, and Islam was equated with terrorism. The education system promoted de-Islamization, fostering an Islamophobic ideology in the new generation, starting from kindergarten. All people had been sent to concentration camps where they had been imposed by brainwashing programs and forced to abandoned Islam and origin identity. All these genocidal Islamophobic policies of China target altering East Turkistan from the Islam the people believe and establish their identity and motivation on it. Those are besides the crimes relating to other aspects like demography, economy, mobilization, social activity, and development (ETHR, 2022).

3. The war on Islam in East Turkistan is reinforced by China's Islamophobic propaganda on its primary domestic TV channels around China. This toxic narrative has extended to private social media platforms, aligning with the government's agenda to foster Islamophobia across China. This strategy aims to both demonize

Islam and divert attention from the government's genocide in East Turkistan (Miao, Y. 2020).

## **Modified by Order - The Islamophobic Islam**

China's aim to erase Islam from East Turkistan is hard to be reached because of its deep-rooted connection with the region's cultural and ethnic identity. Despite China's efforts, Islam remains a resilient force. Concurrently, China seeks to expand influence into Muslim-populated areas such as Central Asia and the Middle East, necessitating a facade of Muslim friendliness. In 2014, China introduced the "Chinese Islam" project, collaborating with Chinese-raised "Imams" and Middle Eastern scholars to fashion a version of Islam that aligns with China's interests, devoid of anti-communist, anti-colonial, or anti-Sinicization sentiments. Yes, The Chinese Islam - Colonization-friendly Communist Islam will be the new fiction of Islam, the Islam that is Islamophobic in the nature and rejects the origin Islamic



sentiments and interpretations to create an Islam, favourite for Islamophobic governments and individuals (Ramachandran, V. 2023).

## Failure of Muslim Solidarity

The Chinese Genocide has spurred global attention from various quarters: politicians, academics, civil organizations, and international and national human rights bodies. Since 2017, countless Muslim activists and initiatives have emerged, aiming to raise awareness, condemn, and express solidarity with East Turkistan, responding to the calls by East Turkistan diaspora and representative organizations. Notable Muslim-majority countries such as Türkiye, Kuwait, Qatar, and Malaysia have vocally supported this cause. In the West, activities opposing the ongoing genocide have also gained momentum. For instance, the UK's **Stand 4 Uyghurs Coalition** united hundreds of global Muslim organizations in an international protest, while **Free Uyghur Now**, an initiative by US-based Muslim students, actively advocates for East Turkistan.

Simultaneously, Muslim charities worldwide have played a vital role in supporting the Uyghur diaspora, particularly in Türkiye and Pakistan, aiding vulnerable community members and fostering organizational efforts. Furthermore, Muslim scholars have delved into academia, examining Chinese Islamophobia in Turkish, Arabic, and English research. Notably, Professor Khaled Beydoun's book *The New Crusades - Islamophobia and the Global War on Muslims* sheds light on Chinese Islamophobia through an academic and practical analysis.

Despite this widespread Muslim solidarity, its impact has been somewhat limited. China strategically invites Muslim delegations to East Turkistan, aiming to downplay its crimes and normalize the situation post-genocide, while those Muslim delegations make soft diplomatic statements to avoid political repercussions. This move suggests China's fear of louder Muslim voices, even though many Muslim speakers are unaware of these tactics (CNN, 2019).

Although there is a substantial volume of social, political, and financial support for East Turkistan, its overall quality and impact remains underwhelming.

Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), tasked with addressing Muslim issues, has been notably silent about the ongoing East Turkistan genocide, despite previous efforts by former Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. While Türkiye persists in calling for unified action within OIC, the lack of consensus among member states has hindered the organization's effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities (Center for Uyghur Studies, 2023).

## Conclusion: Action needed

The ongoing Genocide is a result of China's rapid assimilation policy driven by its Islamophobic communist ideology in the region. This policy aims to ensure the security of its Grand Strategy and successful colonization while eradicating any physical threat, weakening ideological resistance, and creating a normalized post-genocide environment. Islam, as a rejection of autocracy, assimilation, and injustice, poses a threat to China's goals. The ongoing genocide in East Turkistan, a facet of China's expansionist aims, serves as a warning of a global threat to international peace, values, and justice.

To address this threat and safeguard the rights of the people in East Turkistan, several actions must be undertaken on both domestic and international fronts:

- 1. Recognition of the ongoing Genocide:** Muslim countries need to acknowledge the reality of the ongoing genocide and its Islamophobic nature. The recognition of Uyghur genocide act should be passed in the Muslim parliaments. This recognition will lend support to anti-genocide efforts and advocacy activities both within and outside these countries.
- 2. Bilateral Diplomatic Approach:** Muslim countries play a vital role in China's energy imports and investments. Their collective voices can have significant impact, influencing China's actions and potentially halting the ongoing genocide.
- 3. International Obligation:** Muslim countries, bound by their constitutions and values, should fulfill their obligation to protect fellow

Muslims. International bodies like the OIC and the UN provide a foundation for action against genocide, reinforcing the responsibility of Muslim nations to address the situation.

- 4. Individual and Collective Efforts:** Civil organizations, parliament members, and individuals within Muslim societies can make substantial contributions to global solidarity efforts. Public awareness and action can further motivate governments to fulfill their obligations.

Understanding the multidimensional nature of the ongoing genocide in East Turkistan is crucial for devising effective strategies that address both its Islamophobic aspect and its political motivations.

## References:

- Beydoun, K. A., & Crenshaw, K. (2023). *The new crusades: Islamophobia and the global war on Muslims*. University of California Press.
- OHCHR, U. (2022). OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ohchr-assessment-human-rights-concerns-xinjiang-uyghur-autonomous-region>
- ETHR, (2022). Doğu Türkistan Soykırımı Raporu. Retrieved from <https://www.ethrw.org/>
- Luqiu, L. R., & Yang, F. (2018). Islamophobia in China: news coverage, stereotypes, and Chinese Muslims' perceptions of themselves and Islam. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 28(6), 598-619.
- Tynen, S. (2022). Islamophobia, terrorism and the Uyghurs: When minorities in China find themselves on the wrong side of the counterterrorism discourse. *Geopolitics*, 27(1), 360-365.
- Center for Uyghur Studies, (2023). Islamophobia in China and attitudes of Muslim Countries Report by Center for Uyghur Studies. Retrieved from [www.uyghurstudy.org](http://www.uyghurstudy.org)
- Miao, Y. (2020). Sinicisation vs. Arabisation: Online narratives of islamophobia in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29(125), 748-762.
- Ramachandran, V. (2023). Secularism with Chinese Characteristics: Xi Jinping's Sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang. *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs*, 26(3), 1-71.
- Qiblawi, T. (2019). Muslim nations are defending China as it cracks down on Muslims, shattering any myths of Islamic solidarity Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/17/asia/uyghurs-muslim-countries-china-intl/index.html>



# Thoughts on the Universal Necessity of Development



**Ceyda Bostanci**

Ph.D. in Political Science and  
International Relations, Istanbul  
University.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg60>

The “sustainable development” approach is presented as a solution in the environmental crises we are experiencing today. Debates about the adequacy of this approach are being conducted within a limited framework. The norm of sustainable development has become a universal acceptance but who among us has been liberated by this “universal acceptance”? In answering this question, we first need to answer the following questions. Why do we need to develop? For whom do we need to develop? Freedom and development are intertwined through these two questions. When these two questions are addressed, it will be understood that the perspective of development has transformed into a form of domination that developed countries impose on developing ones. Therefore, there is a need to discuss the norms of development as a form of domination. The obligations imposed by these development norms do not reduce environmental vulnerabilities.

In the late 1960s, the influence of growth-centered development approaches has been implicated in the emergence of environmental crises, prompting a necessity to discuss the relationship between environment and development (Başarmak & Görmez, 2019, p. 2301). The notion of prosperity brought about by growth-oriented development has faced criticism. The “Limits to Growth” report prepared by the Club of Rome in 1972 highlighted, for the first time since Adam Smith, the necessity of curtailing growth (Torgerson, 1995, p. 8). In 1987, the “Our Common Future” report by the Brundtland Commission introduced the concept of “sustainable development.” According to this report, it is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987, p. 54).

Thus, it has been believed that through the perspective of sustainable development, environmental crises and underdevelopment can be overcome. Moreover, with consideration for future generations, the framework of responsibility has been broadened. The Agenda 21 decisions discussed during the 1992 Rio Summit resurfaced at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, contributing to the formation of today’s principles of sustainable development.

Development models and the paradigms that shape these models are not new. Through this analysis,

“

*It is necessary to evaluate the opportunities and freedoms that the universally accepted perspective of sustainable development, embraced by Muslim societies as well, offers to these societies.*

”

development models carry forms of domination and perspectives on justice. Despite the serious demand for sustainable development within Muslim societies, achieving these goals with the economic order presented by the international system seems unlikely. Today, it is necessary to evaluate the opportunities and freedoms that the universally accepted perspective of sustainable development, embraced by Muslim societies as well, offers to these societies. This acceptance has been reinforced by the concept of “access.” How this concept of access is reflected in the sustainability development index will be examined. These evaluation criteria are not sufficient to understand the developmental issues faced by Muslim societies. Hence, the relationship between freedom and development must be comprehended.

## Development and Freedom

Amartya Sen reevaluated the issue of development based on the concept of “freedom” and contributed to the formation of a human-centered development understanding that serves our current perspective on development. According to Sen (2004, p. 400), “development is a great encounter with the capabilities of freedom.” Therefore, development cannot be considered as “development” if it doesn’t allow for possibilities of freedom. For Sen (2004, p. 14), the expansion of freedoms is a function of development. Through the perspective of expanding freedoms, he not only implies the increase in political, economic, or social freedoms, but also the accessibility of these freedoms for people living in various parts of the world. In this context, he constructed a development ethic centred on the accessibility of freedoms.

Sen defines the perspective of freedom through the relationship of “capability” and “capacity.” According to him, freedom is not merely about satisfying

desires, income, spending, consumption, or meeting basic needs criteria, but rather about individuals being able to act and become based on their capacities (Uğur, 2017, p. 95). Therefore, he criticizes the notion of a specific group playing a leading role in the economic system.

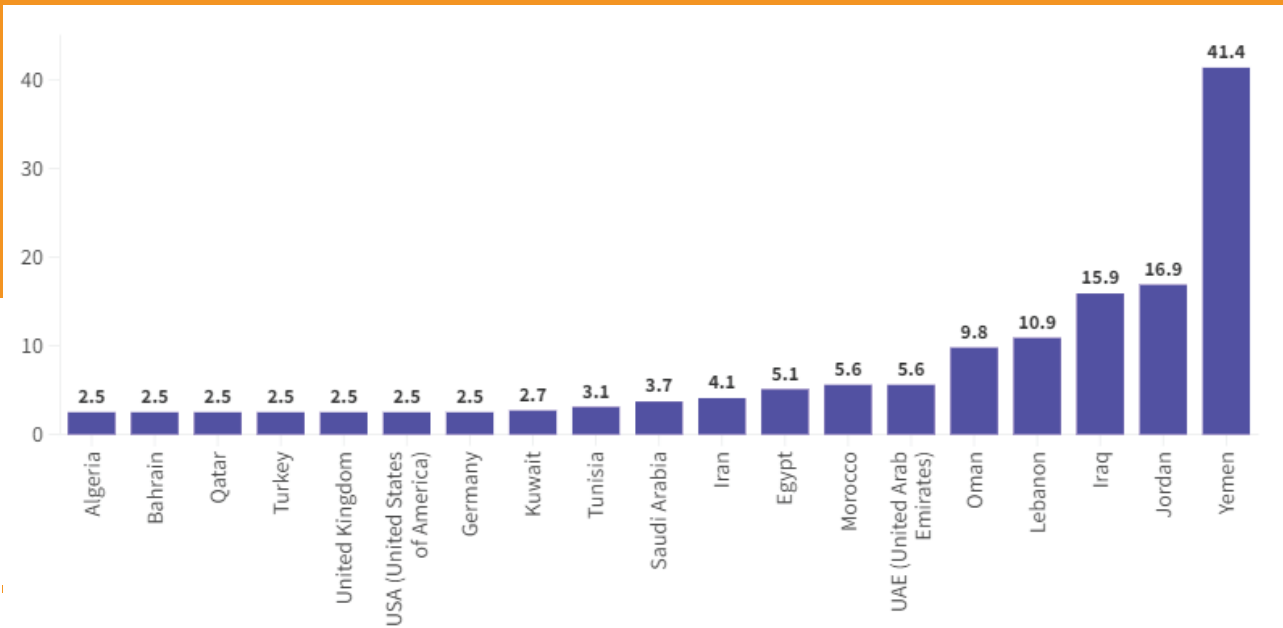
Recognizing that the constraints imposed by the economic system impede access to freedoms, Sen directed his criticism towards the concept of welfare economics. Within the framework of welfare economics, the value contributed by individuals deprived of numerous freedoms tends to decrease or remains entirely unaccounted for (Insel, 2000, p. 15). Sen argues for the incorporation of non-income variables into the economic system as valuable indicators. These variables encompass “factors such as the ability to attain a certain standard of living, freedom from preventable illnesses, access to income-generating employment, and the opportunity to live in peaceful and crime-free communities” (2004, pp. 392-393).

According to Sen, welfare is not a singular goal and cannot be thought of independently of one’s capacity for action (Insel, 2000, p. 16). A person’s ability to take action cannot be detached from the conditions they are experiencing. If someone is living in a region with limited means of subsistence and their sole source of income is to cut down and sell trees for fuel in that area, would it be fair to ask them why they are cutting down trees or to penalize them? Hence, a person’s economic relationship with the environment cannot be considered separately from the opportunities presented to them.

According to Sen, within the ethics of freedom, the principles of choice and freedom norms are fundamental, and an individual realizes their freedom by making choices and being able to implement them

Figure 1. Prevalence of Malnutrition (2020)

Source: SDG Index



(Insel, 2000, p. 16). While making these choices, the obstacles and opportunities they encounter determine their capacity. This capacity is shaped by the economic and social conditions of the society in which they live. Hence, individual freedom should become one of society's commitments (Sen, 2004, p. 14).

According to Sen, for a just and secure life, individuals must possess economic freedoms. The violation of economic freedoms not only leads to the inability to access basic needs but also results in the deprivation of numerous social freedoms (Sen, 2004, p. 23). Therefore, economic freedoms should be considered in conjunction with social freedoms and given priority. When one gains access to economic freedoms, they acquire the means to reach their basic needs and attain social freedoms.

## Whose Freedoms Were Enriched by Sustainable Development?

Today, the prevailing concept of an ideal development is "sustainable development." The norm of sustainable development has outlined 17 goals. New values have been defined, such as ending poverty, ensuring clean water and sanitation, taking climate action, and achieving access, justice, peace, strong institutions, and cooperation. These values are aimed to be realized in a global context. Particularly due to issues like poverty, environmental crises, and conflicts, the international community has opened

up further discussions on the "access" norm. The resolution of this access issue becomes achievable through societies' realization of development.

Although the concept of development has been articulated through different paradigms in each era, these paradigms have consistently been primarily framed within the context of "underdevelopment" (Başarmak & Görmez, 2019, p. 2305). Developed countries tend to score the highest in the Sustainable Development Index, while least developed and developing countries are positioned lower in the rankings. Upon initial examination of this index, a flow from those managing sustainable development most effectively to those managing it less effectively becomes evident. However, based on these 17 principles, there isn't sufficient data available regarding how well these countries are meeting their basic needs or how they are achieving this. For instance, considering the criteria of inadequate nutrition set by the sustainable development index, Yemen emerges as one of the most vulnerable countries with 41% prevalence of inadequate nutrition. Following Yemen, Iraq and Jordan are among the countries facing challenges in terms of inadequate nutrition.

Countries including Türkiye, the United Kingdom, Germany, Algeria, and Bahrain have been assessed as having equal prevalence of malnutrition. When country profiles are examined in more detail, a classification has been established based on the levels of difficulty. Despite Germany and Algeria having the same percentage in the malnutrition index,

Germany faces significant challenges in achieving the “zero hunger” principle, while Algeria grapples with primary challenges (SDG Index, n.d.). Other criteria assessed in the index include the prevalence of stunting, wasting, and obesity among children under five years old. These criteria are considered sufficient for achieving the “zero hunger” target. At this juncture, conditions of access to food and the extent to which one utilizes their capacity while accessing that food should be incorporated into the criteria. Additionally, data regarding the types of food one can access and the quantity of food one can consume daily should be included.

On the other hand, the process of accessing food in these countries doesn’t occur through the same means. Recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the deepening food crises due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict highlight this situation. The report titled “Agenda of the Muslim World” has emphasized the significance of these food crises. It has been highlighted that North Africa and third-world countries are the ones most affected by the Ukraine crisis (Demirci, 2023, p. 95).

Whenever a crisis emerges, these countries tend to suffer the most damage. The Sustainable Development Report has recommended and provided suggestions for strengthening the economic sphere of these countries (Boğaziçi University, n.d.). However, it appears unlikely that Muslim societies can achieve their sustainable development goals based on the norms of this utilitarian-driven economic system. Instead, these goals seem to remain merely promises from the international community. Consequently, the freedoms that Muslim societies can attain remain limited. The primary reason for the failure to implement these principles is the utilitarian-driven understanding of sustainable development. The continuous growth, consumption, maximum profit, and competition norms on which the market economy is based remain unaltered, preventing sustainable development from offering a significantly different perspective than the traditional development approach (Başarmak & Görmez, 2019, p. 2318). Therefore, Muslim societies should construct development norms that are based on their own needs and can harness their existing capacities.

The primary reason for the lack of implementation of these principles is the economic system rooted in utilitarian ethics. The understanding of sustainable development cannot be said to present a significantly different perspective from the traditional development approach, as the norms of continuous growth, consumption, maximum profit, and competition on which the market economy relies remain unchanged (Başarmak & Görmez, 2019, p. 2318).

## Conclusion

If we consider Muslim societies as developed, developing, underdeveloped, or grappling with issues of poverty and inequality, it is due to the relationship we establish between development and freedom. What needs to be discussed today is the development-freedom perspective introduced by Sen. Upon discussing this, it becomes evident that the real need isn’t just “development” but rather a “new economic perspective.” As a result, the approach of Muslim societies “needing to develop” will transform. Therefore, the primary necessity for Muslim societies is to establish an ethics of development.

Amartya Sen, who establishes a connection between development and freedom, has brought criticisms to the economic system shaped by utilitarian ethics. The current economic system is still conducted on the basis of utilitarian ethics, and this ethical understanding has resurfaced through Sen’s concept of capabilities. Despite the discussions of various global issues in our present economic system, such as poverty and climate change, the ethical framework remains unchanged.

While the principles of sustainable development may suggest an inclusive approach towards societies, Amartya Sen’s conception of freedom within the economic system has ushered in new transformations. However, despite these changes, environmental fragility continues to rise, and the perspective of sustainable development needs to be scrutinized due to the persisting inability of many societies to fulfill their basic needs. It becomes essential to question how effectively the solution pathways proposed by this perspective truly cater to the diverse needs of societies. Moreover, the adoption of universal assumptions tends to narrow down the

socio-economic contexts of communities, measuring their capacities against variables defined by more advanced nations.

As suggested by Sen, non-income variables should be incorporated into the economic system, and economic freedoms need to be fostered. Building on this perspective, the international economic system should be transformed by considering the access process to food or water and the capacity expended by those living in conflict zones such as Palestine, Yemen, and Syria.

## References

- Başarmak, H. I. B., & Görmez, K. (2019). Sürdürülebilir kalkınma vs. ekolojik düşünce. *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 10(17), 2299-2323.
- Boğaziçi Üniversitesi. (n.d.). *Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Raporu 2021*. <http://unsdsn.boun.edu.tr/sdr2021/>
- Demirci, H. (2023). *Müslüman Dünyanın Gündemi: 2022 Genel Görünümü*. İLKE. <https://ilke.org.tr/musluman-dunyanin-gundemi-2022-genel-gorunumu>
- İnsel, A. (2000). Özgürlük etiği karşısında iktisat kuramı: Amartya Sen'in etik iktisat önerisi. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 86, 7-21.
- SDG Index. (n.d.). SDG Dizini ve Gösterge Tabloları Bölüm 2. <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters/part-2-the-sdg-index-and-dashboards#figure-2-17-2023-sdg-dashboards-for-oecd-countries-levels-and-trends>
- Sen, A. (2004). *Özgürlükle Kalkınma*. Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Torgerson, D. (1995). The uncertain quest for sustainability: public discourse and the politics of environmentalism. In *Greening Environmental Policy: The Politics of a Sustainable Future* (pp. 3-20).
- Uğur, M. S. (2017). Amartya Sen'in Kapasite Yaklaşımı ve İnsan Merkezli Bir Kalkınma Anlayışı. *Sosyoekonomi*, 25(1).
- United Nations (UN). (1987, August 4). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development "Our Common Future" A/42/427.





The Platform is published by TODAM under auspices of İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education in an attempt to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic and cultural affairs of Muslim societies. The Platform is published as part of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project.

It aims to be a platform where the Muslim world affairs are analysed in light of the activities of major think tanks, research centres and institutes, universities, and political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and its intellectual advances are presented to Türkiye and the whole world through Platform magazine. The magazine keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world and uses its website and database to share news and developments related to different institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

---

 [platform.ilke.org.tr](http://platform.ilke.org.tr)

 [platform@ilke.org.tr](mailto:platform@ilke.org.tr)

  [@platform\\_ilke](https://www.instagram.com/platform_ilke)

---

**İLKE**  
Foundation for science, culture and education

**todam**  
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR SOCIAL THOUGHT AND POLICY

A: Aziz Mahmut Hüdai Mah. Türbe Kapısı Sk. No: 13 Üsküdar/ İstanbul  
P: +90 216 532 63 70 Email: [todam@ilke.org.tr](mailto:todam@ilke.org.tr) Web: [ilke.org.tr/todam](http://ilke.org.tr/todam)