



"INDEED THE WORLD IS GREEN AND SWEET," BUT "WALK SOFTLY ON THE EARTH":

*Towards an Islamic Energy Ethic
and Praxis*

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This article will seek to briefly explain some ways in which one of the significant faith communities, the Muslims, now numbering worldwide over 1.6 billion, can recognize and understand their relationship with the Earth and her resources according to their *Shariah* (Sacred Law)¹ as derived from their sacred texts of the Holy *Quran*² and *Hadith/Sunnah*³ of the Prophet Muhammad (AS)⁴ and some ways in which this environmental ethical understanding and associated practices need to be revived practically going forward.

In Islam, the linkage of doing one's religious duty to *Allah* (God) through proper service and interaction with one's fellow human beings and other creatures is essential and clearly established. The Holy *Quran* uses the Arabic terms *Hablu'Allah* and *Hablu'Naas*: cable that connects human beings to Allah along the vertical plane and cable which connects human beings to

- 1 The word *Shariah* literally means "a waterway that leads to a main stream, a drinking place, and a road or the right path." From this meaning, the word *Shariah* was used to refer to a path or a passage that leads to an intended place, or to a certain goal. Although the word *Shariah* and its different derivative forms are mentioned in five places in the *Quran*, its extensive use only came into vogue much later, for the words *Islam* and *deen* (religion) were more commonly employed to express the same meaning in the early days of *Islam*. *Shariah* (Sacred or Divine Law), conceptually, refers to a set of rules, regulations, teachings, and values governing the lives of Muslims. However, these rules and regulations, contrary to how they are often described by many non-Muslims, cover every aspect of life. *Shariah* embraces worship, morals, individual attitude and conduct, as well as the political, social, economic, criminal, and civil spheres.
- 2 Muslims hold The Holy *Quran* as being the uncreated Divine Word/Speech (Logos) whose wording and meaning are both from *Allah*. It is the first of the two universally accepted primary sources of *Hidaya* (life guidance) and *Shariah* (Islamic jurisprudence/legislation) for Muslims. All verses quoted from the Holy *Quran* throughout this paper and their English translations are taken from Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, Holy *Quran* translator. The Holy *Quran*
- 3 *Hadith* is the Arabic word for the sacred saying of the Prophet Muhammed (AS) as remembered and recorded by his *Sahabah* (Companions), *Azwaj* (Wives), or *Ahl-UL-Bayt* (literally "People of the House" – immediate familial relations). It is also used in connection with the term *Sunnah* (Traditions) which includes Prophetic actions and approvals as well as sayings as they pertain to the sacred (bearing in mind that Islam does not maintain the same duality and apparent concrete separation of sacred/profane as found in the modern Western Judeo-Christian context, but rather a more fluid continual spectrum. A more appropriate term might be religious – but this too, like all such terms, is value laden). It is the second of the two universally accepted primary sources of *Hidaya* (life guidance) and *Shariah* (Islamic jurisprudence/legislation) for Muslims.
- 4 Throughout this paper, I have chosen to use wherever appropriate the original Arabic/Islamic terms (*italicized*) as means of familiarizing the reader who may be unaccustomed to the religious language with that language and its flavor. *AS* is an abbreviation for the Arabic phrase "*Alayhe-Salam*" which means "Peace be upon him". Islamic tradition holds that whenever Prophet Muhammed's name is mentioned verbally or in writing, the aforementioned phrase must be uttered as a matter of religious practice and respect. In addition, the same phrase is strongly commended to be used when mention is made of any recognized Prophet or Messenger or similar ranking personality.

the rest of creation in the horizontal plane. Each cable conditions and is conditioned by the other. This in turn creates mutual rights, duties and obligations between human kind and Allah (*Huquq Allah*) and human kind and the rest of creation “worshippers” (*Huquq al-Ibaad*). This type of linkage and positive interaction can be described broadly as ethics.

Human beings have been charged with amanah (trust) (33:72), that is the just (adl) and effective (ihsan) administration of all that has been placed under our control and use (taskhir) in our multi-faceted role as Khalifa—vicegerants (6:165).

Ethical understandings and insights occur and are communicated within religious traditions. A useful working definition of “religious tradition” is one put forth by Joseph Runzo: “A religion or a religious tradition consists of a complex set of social elements—symbols and ritual, myths and stories, concepts and truth-claims—which a community believes gives ultimate meaning to life by connecting the religious adherent to the transcendent.” A religious life thus rests on a specific claim about the nature of reality, about how meaning and value are to be achieved, and about what is the desired end for humankind. To follow a religious life in part is to follow a moral life which in turn is informed by and informs one’s ethical point of view. Ethics then is the reasoning about morality, and is situated in the person, community/society, place and time of its making. It is interesting to note that both terms, “ethics” (etymologically from the Greek *ethos*, *ethike*) and “morality” (etymologically from the Latin *mos*, *mores*) mean customs or sacred customs of the people. The challenge of environmental crisis brought on by global warming and climate change caused the construction of environmental ethics and spurred the world’s religions to develop their own set of environmental ethics based on their religious values.

Islamic ethics has historically been incorporated within the Islamic

Science (*Ilm*) known as *Ilm al-akhlaq*. Linguistically the Arabic term *akhlaq* (plural of *khuluq*) means character, nature, and disposition. The word *akhlaq* is closely related and connected to the word *khaliq* (the Creator) and *makhluq* (the creation). Therefore, linguistically speaking *akhlaq* assumes a good, wholesome, sound and positive relationship between the Creator and the creation, and between and among creatures. The term *khuluq* appears in the Quranic verse “And You (Muhammad) are on an exalted standard of character” (HQ 68:4) and was the essence of the Prophet Muhammed’s (AS) self described mission when he said “*I have been sent to perfect good (best of) character.*”

Over the millennia different Muslim scholars from across the theological spectrum have devoted much time, thought, research and scholarly writings to this matter. A common thread through these diverse views is that the scope of Islamic ethics or *ilm al-akhlaq* is wide, comprehensive and far reaching because it deals with the relationship between human beings and their Creator Allah, and human beings and all other creatures. In all these senses the *Maqasid* (Goals) of *Shariah* (which I will discuss later) give practical form to ethical norms and seek to construct human life on the basis of the *Hisbah—Amr bil Maroof wa Nahy anil Munkar* (Enjoining the Right and Forbidding the Wrong). Maulana Maududi in his Tafseer *Tahfimumul* (Meaning of) Quran—has defined *Ma’roof* as historically universal accepted good “good, known, well-known, generally recognized, beneficence, and approved by *Shariah*” and *Munkar*, which is the opposite of *Ma’roof*, means historically universal accepted wrong/evil “bad, evil, detestable, disagreeable, abominable, disapproved”. In general, What is Good (*Maroof*) and Approved are the *Halaal*, the Lawful in Islam. What is evil (*Munkar*) and disapproved are the *Haraam*, the Prohibited in Islam. The enactment of the *hisbah* is a societal or communal obligation (*Fard Keefaya*), meaning it rests within the power of the State and legitimate governmental authorities, but should the State fall short in carrying this out with justice and fairness then the responsibility and obligation devolves to the individuals (*Fard Ayn*) who are the members of that State.

The question for the Muslim is not who owns these resources, whether water, the soil, its vegetation, plant and animal life above or its minerals (including fossil fuel deposits) beneath, for in all these cases it is *Allah* (God) (HQ 10:55; and 6:73).

The scheme of life envisaged by Islam is a complete whole that revolves around the central concept of *Tawheed* (divine unity/oneness). For the believing Muslim, Islam is not a mere appendage to life, it is life itself!⁵ The primary basis of an Islamic world view is the idea of Tawhid, or the oneness of God. A world view based on Tawheed sees this universe as originating from God, returning to Him, and centered about Him. The Unity of *Allah* has several corollaries, including: unity of all religions (not uniformity or unanimity) and unity of humanity with all its diversity (not sameness) and the unity of creation. The universe and all it contains originates from the power of the Word, the active singular Will from which all creation came “*Kun fa Ya Kun*—be and it is”⁶. The fact that all groups⁷ of living beings owe their existence directly to *Allah* and therefore stand on the same footing is beautifully expressed in the verse “...There is no beast that walks on the earth and no bird that flies on its two wings which is not *Allah’s* creatures like yourselves. No single thing have we neglected in our Decree”⁸. This verse gives some idea of the sanctity to which all life is held in Islam or what

5 An insightful observation about the real life implications of Divine Unity for a faithful and practicing Muslim was put forth by Syed Qutub when he noted “Islam chooses to unite heaven and earth in one spiritual organism ... For the center of its being and the field of its action is human life in its entirety, spiritual and material, religious and worldly. Muslims must practice their faith in their social, legal and economic relationships. One of the characteristic marks of this faith is the fact that it is essentially a unity. It is at once worship and work, religious law and exhortation.” Qutub, Syed, *Social Justice in Islam*, pp.7-8.

6 Holy *Quran* (36:82)

7 The Holy *Quran* refers to non-human communities of creatures as being “*Ummams*” (nations/societies) like yourselves (human) (Holy *Quran* 6:38)

8 Holy *Quran* (6:38)

Thomas Berry refers to as the “rights of living species”⁹.

In an oft referenced *hadith* by Muslims involved in the environmental “green” movement, The Prophet Muhammed (AS) said: “Indeed the world is green and sweet, and indeed Allah has left you to remain as *Khalifatul ard* (stewards or more correctly guardians and caretakers of the Earth and its resources) to see how you behave. So take care of the world, beware of the world.” This is similar to the Quranic *Aya* (Verse but also the term used for Sign in nature...) It is He (Allah-God) who has made you (human beings) as (His) *Khalaif* (guardians/caretakers) of the earth: He has raised you in ranks some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He has given you: for your Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful” (HQ 6:165). According to this view, Human beings have been charged with the *amanah* (trust) (33:72), that is the just (*adl*) and effective (*ihsan*) administration of all that has been placed under our control and use (*taskhir*) in our multi-faceted role as *Khalifa*—vicegerants (6:165). This trust not only encompasses the web of human relations, but extends outward in ever expanding concentric circles to include all within the natural world. In another *hadith*, he (AS) observed a timeless truth and worldly reality when he said: “People have common share (*arfaq*) in three (things). Grass (herbage/vegetation for ourselves and the animal world, both domesticated and wild), water and fire (includes electrical power—sourced by fossil fuels and other sources of non-renewable and renewable energy).” According to Islamic *Fiqhi* (Juridical) terminology *arfaq*—is that which is held in common or commonage so that all humans (and I would also hold that in many cases non-humans as well) have an inalienable right to benefit from them and to expect their prudent use and just and equitable distribution. The question for the Muslim is not who owns these resources whether water, the soil, its vegetation, plant and animal life above or its minerals (including fossil fuel deposits) beneath, for in all these cases it is *Allah* (God) (HQ 10:55; and 6:73). Ownership in Islam is then more in keeping with the concept of trusteeship, a type of individual interim ownership. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, a commentator of the Qur’an, says of the verse 33:72 regarding “*Amanah*”; “There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the

9 Berry, p. 111

giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.” (Ali, A.Y. The Holy Qur’an; Text, Translation and Commentary. Maryland; Amanah Corporation. 1989. pg. 1080)

Most if not all of the conflicts throughout human history can be directly or indirectly tied to the fair access and/or just control over these finite, life sustaining resources.

In other words, the guardian of the trust has a high degree of freedom and accompanying responsibility (and accountability) in the use (or misuse) of the given trust. Hence the focus of concern is rather on “who” has the right to determine and to what extent the access to those non-renewable resources, their distribution and consumption. From a *Fiqhi* perspective within the various Madthahab (Schools of Thought/Jurisprudence) there are several kinds of this type of individual ad interim ownership that have been discussed by Muslim scholars over the years. In general most Muslim scholarship has had the tendency to defer most forms of those non-renewable resources held in common to the State ownership who in turn is expected administer them in the public interest and for the public (common) good (maslaha mursala). The historic experience of this type of State administered and run ownership, especially as it pertains to the modern period and to resources like fossil fuels has been mixed at best.

The fact of the matter is that most if not all of the conflicts throughout human history, whether at the communal, regional, national or international level can be directly or indirectly tied to the fair access and/or just control over these finite, life sustaining resources. Simply put, our problem as humans is that we are not sharing these common resources equitably, neither horizontally (among the living human and non-human beings, in particular between the Geo-politically developed Global North and the under-developed Global South) nor vertically (among the living and the yet to be born—intergenerational equity) thru implementing ecologically

conscientious, environmentally friendly, and sustainable development practices and policies.

In response, global faith communities and their respective religious leadership have declared their intent to battle climate change with the release of statements and declarations that articulate their religious environmental ethics. These include the Papal Encyclical on the Environment and Climate Change, *Laudato Si’*, and similar faith based declarations made by Jewish, Christian and other faith communities, sects and denominations. At a historic meeting of over 60 Muslim scholars, academics, and environmental activists from over twenty countries held in Istanbul, Turkey (August 17-18, 2015) an Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (<http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/>) was adopted. This bold grassroots initiative was driven by various NGO’s including Greenfaith, Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Climate Action Network (CAN) International, OurVoices campaign, and others. Specifically, the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change affirms the UN position that aims to limit global warming above pre-industrial levels to 2, or preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius thru reduction and limitation of anthropogenic human caused fossil fuels burning and resultant CO2 and other green house gas emissions in the atmosphere. The Declaration is possibly unique among other similar declarations adopted previously by Muslim groupings and organizations—as well as those put forth by other faith communities in, that it calls for a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and a switch to 100% renewable energy as well as increased support by the major green house gas emitters (Geo-political global north—so called developed nations and China) for vulnerable communities (Geo-political global south), including people of color who are disproportionately suffering from climate change impacts and where much of the Muslim population of the world resides (Asian Pacific Region 61.7%; Middle East/Northern Africa 19.8%; Sub-saharan Africa 15.5%—Pew Research Forum on Religion). Wealthy and oil-producing nations (of which the USA is now number one) are urged to phase out all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. All people, leaders and businesses are invited to commit to 100% renewable energy in order to

tackle climate change, reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. This pattern cannot continue indefinitely and is unsustainable because it is destroying the resources or conditions upon which it depends. Writ small this call put forth in the Declaration is for divestment from fossil fuels assets, stocks and capital investments.

This concept of not disturbing the earth is in keeping with the Quranic injunction “*to walk softly on the earth*” (HQ 25:63). Scholars of *Tafseer* (Quranic exegesis) inform us that this walking softly on the earth is exemplified by the Prophet Muhammed (AS)—who was himself the embodiment of the Holy Quran, “a walking Quran”. His manner of walking was to place his feet firmly on the ground as if he was always walking down hill and not to penetrate or disrupt it. Hence a more “green” ecological reading of this verse is to not cause harm to the earth. In modern environmental terminology, it includes reducing our carbon footprint that results from the burning of fossil fuels which is driven by our over-consumption. It is also part of the *Rahma*—Mercy—and hence *Sharia* to adhere to the general principle of not being the cause of harm/hurt to one another. In the words of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH): “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm”. The mechanism of harming or violating the earth is *fasad* (corruption), or as contemporary Muslim scholars like Dr. Yusuf Qaradawi have interpreted the term, “pollution” in the earth, which the Quran holds is the result of what “the hands of man have wrought” (HQ 30:41) anthropogenic. Muslims must strive to follow this Prophetic best example—*Uswat-Hasana*—in all aspects of their lives, including our investment decisions.

Broadly speaking the divestment campaign asks all investors, not just corporate, institutional, NGOs, organized religious communities/bodies, but also individuals, to consider cleaning up their investment portfolios, but the operative question is how? The immediate challenge is how to convince and persuade these investors to do this. General cookie cutter one size fits all arguments about saving the earth for future generations, etc., while correct and generally appealing, will not by themselves push many to action in terms of investments. Religious language, however, which is grounded in our particular faith traditions and which speaks to matters of the soul, life,

salvation and eternal standings (heaven and hell), can be very persuasive in moving the faithful to take action.

The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change is possibly unique in that it calls for a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and a switch to 100% renewable energy.

So here I will briefly outline some ways in which Muslim investors, concerned about ethical *halal* (religiously permissible and sanctioned) investments can be reached and persuaded to become part of the movement, get on board and get with the program. These are by no means the only ways and are at this point in outline form and I invite anyone who can contribute to this effort in any way to step-up to the plate and help make this happen. Now a hot button issue and much discussed these days has been the subject of *Shariah* or Islamic Sacred Law. I am not going to revisit this broad and multi-faceted subject here, but would call your attention to the following facts (abstracted from <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>).

1. *Shariah*, or Islamic law, influences the legal code in most Muslim countries.
2. According to the Pew Research Center 2013 survey findings, most Muslims (around the world) believe *Shariah* is the revealed word of God rather than a body of law developed by men based on the word of God. Many Muslims around the world say *Shariah* should be the law of the land in their Muslim majority country, the survey reveals divergent opinions about the precise application of “the how’s of implementing” Islamic law.

Given this reality, strategically connecting to and including the fossil fuel divestment issue within *Shariah* is critical. Conveying to the faithful that to divest is to uphold and fulfill the purposes and objectives of the *Shariah* and therefore to ensure that one’s Islam is complete and sound, and that to do

otherwise is to violate the *Shariah* and compromise one's Islam, is a critical step in this process. Initially this requires a lot of scholarly work within the Islamic society. Islam has been characterized by some as Lutheran priesthood of the believers par excellence, which means there is no denominational executive council or Papal authority. It starts with proposing the ideas and sharing them with scholars across the religious spectrum and the geographic Muslim world. This in turn will result in critiques of the ideas and debate, subsequent deliberation and consensus building. But the good news is that the proposals and sharing has begun and debate is soon to follow. Then follows the tactical design of new *Shariah*-compliant financial investment instruments (for both corporate, NGOs, non-profits, religious bodies, institutional and individual investors) that allow those who divest to re-invest in *halal* (permissible) investments, including those that include renewable energy and clean energy projects and stocks in their portfolios, much as they are already doing with respect to avoidance investing in the non-*Sharia*-compliant, so called sin stocks (alcohol, gambling, etc.).

The Declaration calls for increased support by the major greenhouse gas emitters (Geo-political global north) for vulnerable communities (Geo-political global south), where much of the Muslim population of the world resides.

Here then is my initial and humble contribution to this endeavor and undertaking:

Shariah literally means the trodden path which leads to the water well, the source of life—or the water way (stream) which leads to the river and sea itself, analogous to the Hebrew term *Halakha* (The Way to Go). A classic and widely referenced definition of *Shariah* give by Sunni scholar Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah states in part “The foundation of the *Shariah* is wisdom and the safeguarding of people's interests in this world and the next. In its

entirety it is justice, mercy and wisdom. Every rule which transcends justice to tyranny, mercy to its opposite, the good to the evil, and wisdom to triviality does not belong to the *Shariah*. The *Shariah* is God's justice and mercy amongst His people. Life, nutrition, medicine, light, recuperation and virtue are made possible by it. Every good that exists is derived from it, and every deficiency in being results from its loss and dissipation, for the *Shariah*, which God entrusted His prophet to transmit, is the pillar of the world and the key to success and happiness in this world and the next.”

By the fourth century after the death of the Prophet (AS), these principles and objectives were formally categorized and organized into an architectural framework by the *Ulema* (scholars) and jurists into the sacred science of *Maqsid Shariah* (Higher Objectives of Sacred Law). Of particular import is the work of one of the religious geniuses Abu Hamid al-Ghazali who wrote categorically that the *Shariah* pursued five basic objectives: preservation (*hifdh*) of faith (*Din*), life (*nafs*), lineage/posterity/family (*Nasl*), intellect (*Aql*) and wealth/material resources/property (*mal*), and that these were to be protected as absolute priorities. He observed “Whatever ensures the safeguard of these five principles serves public interest and is desirable, and whatever hurts them is against public interest and its removal is desirable.” Al-Ghazali's five basic categories or essentials (*al-darurah al-khamsah*) remain the same but order is changed by some scholars and others have added additional categories to them.

In reference to these categories it has been observed by Dr. Kamili Hashim and others “that *Maqsid Shariah* (Higher Objectives of Sacred Law) is still open for further development and enhancement. The nature of this development and enhancement must reflect the priorities of our age and the change of circumstances that we encounter as a result.” In fact this is a must; what is referred to as *tajdid al-`aql wa l-fahm* (renewal of mind and understanding) is to cope with the challenge of modernization and globalization (and I would add climate change). These are the objectives whose fulfillment is essential for the establishment of welfare in this world and in the world hereafter, in the sense that if they are ignored then coherence and order (*taqdir*) cannot be established, the balance (*mizan*) will be disrupted and fasad (chaos, disorder and corruption) will be obvious in this world and the hereafter.

Our communities, nation, the world environment and our very future are threatened by rising global temperatures caused by the green house gas emissions resulting primarily from the burning of fossil fuels. Projections by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,¹⁰ whose scientific integrity has been affirmed repeatedly through rigorous peer-reviewed processes, and the overwhelming scientific consensus have concluded unequivocally that the earth's temperature is warming, that the burning of fossil fuels is largely responsible, and that climate change will cause grave humanitarian, ecological and financial damage on a global scale. In the coming century, this fact will displace (climate-refugees—climargees) and impoverish hundreds of millions of people globally and will increase illness, injury and death rates due to the spread of infectious diseases, heat waves and severe weather-related disasters, and climate change also creates grave damage to the ecological systems on which human civilization and all forms of life depend, thus undermining the very goals and objectives of the *Shariah*.

Traditionally, strategies and policies put forth by environmentalists with respect to limiting and controlling green house gas emissions driven climate change focused on reducing demand and restraining consumption. These included curbing excess and waste and this strategy is very much in keeping with the Quranic injunction as found in verses like “O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loves not those who waste” (HQ 7:31). This ethic of conservation and restraint is exemplified by the growing global grass roots Green Ramadan Movement and example of which is Islamic Society of North America (ISNA's) multi-faceted *Our Masjid is Greening Ramadan Campaign* with its theme “Ramadan—When Less is More” is an example of implementing Prophetic ecological friendly practices at the community level and committing to the “greening” of the Masjids/Mosques facilities as has been recently committed to at the national level by the Moroccan Ministry of Religious affairs. On the government level the idea of a carbon tax (sometimes referred to as carbon fee and dividend CF&D approach championed by Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) and others) which leads to more carbon equity, having those who consume those more carbon,

¹⁰ <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

to pay more for the products and resources that they use and consume. Exploration of new ways and means, especially through the use of modern technologies to capture and sequester carbon (Carbon Capture and Sequestration) from the air and strengthening of traditional policies which seek to do this through nature's proven and time tested way through tree planting and control of de-forestation through deliberate policies of re-forestation and CO2 oxygen exchange as a result of the life giving energy process of photo-synthesis are excellent ideas and they're making slow but steady progress (more slowly in the U.S. than elsewhere, but that's par for the course). Given sufficient time, taken together they would reduce carbon emissions gradually and in significant ways. Time, however, is precisely what we don't have. In Suratul Asr, (HQ 103) the *Quran* mentions that time is running out for human beings to believe and do the right thing. A growing number of respected environmental scientists and economists have stated that in order to stem a global warming disaster, we must stop burning fossil fuels and keep at least 50-75% of CO2 in the ground by not extracting those reserves to start with. To do otherwise is to overwhelm the planet's physical systems, heating the Earth far past the red lines drawn by scientists.

This concept of not disturbing the earth is in keeping with the Quranic injunction “to walk softly on the earth” (HQ 25:63).

It is not just the macro effects of green house gas emissions and the resultant global warming that is of concern, but also the immediate health and well being of the children, our future, but what type of future are we providing for our children and our children's children? Our most precious gift from Allah whose care, existence and future we have been entrusted is inextricably linked and connected with and directly impacts all of the noble goals of Maqasid Shariah. A recent UNICEF study has found that air pollution is a major contributing factor in the deaths of around 600,000 children under five every year—and it threatens the lives and futures of millions more every day,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

“Pollutants don’t only harm children’s developing lungs—they can actually cross the blood-brain barrier and permanently damage their developing brains—and, thus, their futures. No society can afford to ignore air pollution.” The satellite imagery confirms that around 2 billion children live in areas where outdoor air pollution, caused by factors such as vehicle emissions, heavy use of fossil fuels, dust and burning of waste, exceeds minimum air quality guidelines set by the World Health Organization. South Asia has the largest number of children living in these areas, at 620 million, with Africa following at 520 million children. The East Asia and Pacific region has 450 million children living in areas that exceed guideline limits (All the areas cited in this study are areas of heavy Muslim population concentrations). The study also examines the heavy toll of indoor pollution, commonly caused by use of fuels like coal and wood for cooking and heating, which mostly affects children in low-income, rural areas. Together, outdoor and indoor air pollution are directly linked to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases that account for almost one in 10 under-five deaths, making air pollution one of the leading dangers to children’s health. “We protect our children when we protect the quality of our air. Both are central to our future”. The Shariah, Islam and Allah requires no less from us.

What is referred to as *tajdid* *al-`aql wa l-fahm* (renewal of mind and understanding) is to cope with the challenge of modernization and globalization and climate change.

In 1963 during his speech at the historic Civil Rights March on Washington the great American Civil Rights leader, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King stated the following regarding the civil rights of African-Americans—that is equally applicable today in the context of the ravages of climate change: “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum

of life and history, there “is” such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

Is it not time for Muslims, believers, our mosques and our institutions to awaken to their responsibilities as *Khulafa al-ard* (Caretakers of the Earth) and do their part to keep it in the ground? As *Allah* informs the faithful in the Holy *Quran*: “Has not the Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of *Allah* and of the Truth which has been revealed (to them), and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard? For many among them are rebellious transgressors. Know you (all) that *Allah* gives life to the earth after its death! Already have We shown the Signs plainly to you, that you may learn wisdom.” (HQ 57:16-17).



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