



INTERFAITH
RAINFOREST
INITIATIVE

AN ISLAMIC TOOLKIT ON FOREST PROTECTION

RESOURCES FOR RELIGIOUS
LEADERS AND FAITH COMMUNITIES

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is part of a series developed by the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative meant to inform and inspire faith communities to action to help safeguard tropical forests and their inhabitants. The Initiative believes the time has come for a worldwide movement for the care of tropical forests, one that is grounded in the inherent value of forests, and inspired by the values, ethics, and moral guidance of indigenous peoples and faith communities.

This Islamic Toolkit presents a series of reflections, meditations, prayers, talking points, and lesson plans aimed at Muslim practitioners, and assembled with the help of Nana Firman. It is not meant to be exhaustive or final, but represents a living document that can evolve over time with the help and for the benefit of faith communities.

INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative is an international, multi-faith alliance that is working to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to efforts to end tropical deforestation. It is a platform for religious leaders and faith communities to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, governments, NGOs and businesses on actions that protect rainforest and the rights of those that serve as their guardians.

QUESTIONS?

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative is eager to work with you to protect tropical forests and the rights of indigenous peoples. Contact us at info@interfaithrainforest.org.

PARTNERS

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative welcomes engagement by all organizations, institutions and individuals of good faith and conscience that are committed to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of rainforests.



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OPENING REFLECTION

KHUTBAH: THE STEWARDS OF THE EARTH

By Nana Firman

“All Praise be to Allah, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth, and praise be to Him in the life to come. He is the All Wise, the All Aware. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out of it; He knows all that comes down from the heavens and all that goes up to them. He is the Merciful, the Forgiving.” (Qur’an 34:1-2).

We praise Him with praises that are abundant, excellent and blessed.

We bear witness that there is no deity, no object worthy of any act of worship except Allah, the One without any partners, associates or equals. And we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. We respond to Allah’s call in the Qur’an to:

“Remember Allah’s blessings on you” (Qur’an 5:7) by expressing our profound gratitude to Allah for all the graces He has blessed us with.

We thank Him for guiding us to His way. We thank Him for the blessings of health and well-being.

We thank Allah for all the blessings He continues to give us.

Today, in recognition of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, an international, multi-faith alliance that works to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end tropical deforestation, we dedicate this Khutbah on the Stewards of the Earth, to celebrate the wonder, grandeur and beauty of Allah’s Creation. This initiative welcomes engagement by all organizations, institutions and individuals of good faith and conscience who are committed to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of rainforests.

Islam teaches us that everything has rights, from animals and plants to the air, water, and soil. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) advocated for the rights of all beings and things with his radical emphasis on justice and mercy. Particularly in this time of environmental challenge it is good to reflect on the fragility and fine balance of the Creation and to remind ourselves to be good stewards of God’s Creation. What a wondrous universe Allah has created!

“in the alternation of night and day,” (Qur’an 2:164);

“in the rain which Allah has sent down from the sky to give life to the earth when it has been barren,” (Qur’an 2:164);

“in the changing of the winds,” (Qur’an 2:164);

“in the mountains over you,” (Qur’an 2:63);

“in the birds with wings outspread,” (Qur’an 24:41);

in “the gardens, springs” (Qur’an 26:147) – we cannot but be awestruck by these Qur’anic descriptions of Creation.

However, we are failing this Amanah (trust) from Allah and we are failing in our stewardship of the planet and its environment. We now know that our affluence and extravagant lifestyles come with a high environmental

cost. From our overuse of water and extraction of fossil fuels to the destruction of rainforests and vast flows of waste, our unsustainable behavior defiles Allah's Creation.

Our lifestyles are not only threatening our own health and quality of life but also the prospects of masses of people around the world: hundreds of millions, for example, could be affected by climate-related disasters. Therefore, the environmental crisis is not just a scientific problem or an environmental one, but the product of a deep, inner crisis of the soul: it is a moral issue! Indigenous peoples have long evolved traditions and practices for living in mutually supportive relationship with the forests around them. From an Islamic perspective, the rainforests—we call them *ayaat al-kawniyyah*—are signs of God's Creation that, when left undisturbed, demonstrate the *Mizan* (balance) of Creation and the *Fitrah* (primordial patterning) of the Creator. Indeed, the rainforests are not playgrounds, but play a critical role in regulating the Earth's climate by supplying the oxygen (O₂) we breathe and storing the carbon dioxide (CO₂) we produce. In the process, they host indigenous communities and provide them with life and livelihoods. By performing such functions, rainforests submit to the will of Allah. That is how nature works! Unfortunately, modern societies have lost the indigenous understanding and respect for the interdependence of all of life. This worldview must be recovered and restored in societies worldwide.

In describing these dynamics, Allah uses the language of the natural state—*al-fitra*, in which the wisdom inherent in nature is evident. For example, rainforests and other natural repositories are the only safe and proven solutions for carbon capture and storage; as such they are key to addressing climate change. But carbon storage only begins to describe the services of rainforests. They are also key to removing carbon from the atmosphere; providing protection against floods, landslides, avalanches and ocean surges; supplying clean water, fish, medicines and crops; offering space for recreation and exercise; and blessing many faiths with sacred places. Despite their many ecosystem offerings, tropical forests are highly undervalued assets in many societies.

Thus, we urgently need to return to our Islamic sacred sources, the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah, as well as the example of our righteous predecessors, to recalibrate our relationship to the Earth, its environment and all Creation. We begin by reminding ourselves that all Creation belongs to Allah: "Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil belongs to Him." (Qur'an 20:6).

He created the Universe in perfection:

"(He) who created the seven heavens, one above the other. You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates. Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you, weak and defeated." (Qur'an 67:3-4).

All created things, including humans, obey and glorify its Creator:

"The seven heavens and the earth and everyone in them glorify Him. There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand their praise. He is forbearing, most forgiving." (Qur'an 17:44).

Humans need the Earth in order to subsist:

"He has subjected all that is in the heavens and the earth for your benefit, as a gift from Him. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect." (Qur'an 45:13).

But the Earth has no need for humans:

"The Creation of the heavens and earth is greater by far than the Creation of mankind, though most people do not know it." (Qur'an 40:57).

All that Allah has created are “nations” or “communities” unto themselves:

“And there is no creature on (or within) the earth or bird that flies with its wings except (that they are) communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered.” (Qur’an 6:38).

All the elements in the universe are interdependent and connected. The earth and all it contains is a means of subsistence for all creatures, not only for humans:

“As for the earth, We have spread it out, set firm mountains on it, and made everything grow there in due balance. We have provided sustenance in it for you and for all those creatures for whom you do not provide. There is not a thing whose storehouses are not with Us.” (Qur’an 15:19-21).

Indeed, the *ayaat* (signs) in the Universe are “messages for those who reason and think”—testifying to the presence and infinite generosity of the One God who has laid out the Universe as the ‘outspread book’ (al-kitab al-manshur) containing signs mirroring the signs of the ‘written book’, the Qur’an (al-kitab al-mastur).

This is the Earth, the natural world and the environment that Allah has entrusted to us to be its stewards:

“It is He who made you successors (*khalifa*) on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you.” (Qur’an, 6:165).

The Trust or Amana was accepted by humans:

“We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains; yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it; mankind undertook it—they have always been inept and foolish.” (Qur’an 33:72).

As successors and viceregents (*khalifa*) on Earth, we must fulfill the trust placed in us by Allah by acting justly with all His Creation, including protecting rainforests and respecting indigenous communities. The environmental crisis is a call for us to look at ourselves—how we behave and live. Those who violate or abuse the Trust are described in the Qur’an as those who corrupt, degrade and bring ruin on Earth (*mufsidin fi’l-Ard*). The corrupters (*mufsidin fi’l-Ard*) abuse the Amanah (Trust) and are in clear contrast to the stewards of the Earth (*khulafa fi’l-Ard*).

Allah warns us against such actions:

“Corruption has flourished on land and sea as a result of people’s actions and He will make them taste the consequences of some of their own actions so that they may turn back.” (Qur’an 30: 41).

These Qur’anic teachings are clear and unequivocal: we must be, not just ‘friends of the Earth’, but its guardians and equal partners.

We are being challenged, more than ever before in human history, to respond to the environmental crisis. Each of us should aspire to live a simple, sustainable life and to become good stewards of the Earth and its environment:

“It is He who made for you from the green tree, fire, and then from it you ignite.” (Qur’an 30:80).

We have responsibilities to the Earth and its many elements, just as we have responsibilities to our families and other human beings. We will be held accountable for what we do to the Earth, to other living creatures and to the environment.

As such, a Muslim must be eco-conscious if he/she is a believer in God. In the numerous traditions reported from the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) on protecting the Earth and the environment, we come to the conclusion that all Muslims are to be 'eco-Muslims':

The Prophet said, "If any Muslim plants any plant and a human being or an animal eats of it, he will be rewarded as if he had given that much in charity." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6012).

Now, let us conclude with a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be on him) that is the strongest and most striking statement in our religious traditions about the environment. This statement summarizes the Islamic ethics with regard to the environment:

"If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has a seedling in his hand, then let him plant it." (Musnad Ahmad 12491).

Once again, let us reflect and pray for this **Interfaith Rainforest Initiative** that was launched in June 2017 at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway, where Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Taoist faith leaders, climate scientists, rainforest experts and indigenous peoples' representatives from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, and Peru came together to share their commitment to the protection, restoration and sustainable management of rainforests. And finally, we turn to Allah seeking His forgiveness for our actions which have disrupted His Creation that He has endowed for the propagation and sustenance of life.

TALKING POINTS

- 1. The diversity and unity of nature.** Nature in all its diversity is a unity and integral whole, created and sustained by One All-Powerful God, who is constantly and intimately aware of, and continuously in control of, all things, from the tiniest particle to the greatest galaxy. All of Creation follows God's unified "natural" laws, exhibiting perfect pattern (*Fitrah*) and balance (*Mizan*). Everything has its role—its reason for existing and interacting with other things in its own particular way, according to God's all-encompassing knowledge and wisdom. Everything in the Universe obeys, submits to, serves and declares the praises of God, each in its own way, "Have they not considered what things Allah has created? Their shadows incline to the right and to the left, prostrating to Allah, while they are humble. And to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the Earth of creatures, and the angels [as well], and they are not arrogant." (Qur'an 16:48-49). Thus, this universe and all the created beings in it, as one created set of entities, is in servitude to Allah, whether by choice or by force. And, when the rainforests throughout the world continue to be in danger as the result of human activity, such as the demand for wood and the conversion to agricultural land, our Islamic faith requires us to have a special concern to amend the natural environment through accountability to Allah.
- 2. Who is the Earth for?** The Earth was created for all living things, not just human beings. Animals form communities like those of humans. "And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered," (Qur'an 6:38). God provides sustenance for all His creatures as He wills, and inspires them with the knowledge and instincts needed for living. And every living thing that we see every day is replete with distinctive and interesting features. This Earth was given to human beings in trust, and humans share the burden of establishing Godliness (in spreading attributes that constitute the essence of Godliness). The more the Earth is permeated with justice, mercy, compassion and beauty, the nearer the Earth is to the Divine ideal. Likewise, the more corruption/destruction permeates the Earth, the further away the Earth is from Godliness. God has fashioned human beings in the best of forms. Human beings are an especially honored and preferred part of God's Creation. Allah tells us that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all humankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all humankind, (Qur'an 5:32). Hence, it is incumbent upon us to protect and respect our brothers and sisters of the rainforests around the world, and to support their cultural values and indigenous rights of responsibility to land and community-conserved areas.

3. **How does God relate to humans?** After creating the Earth, Allah created many living creatures. One of those living creatures is the human being. The human being is the only physical creature capable of reflecting on the miraculous processes culminating with his entrance and function in the world and upon his own death. It follows that human beings should not only recognize that we have a marvelous Creator, but that He should be rightfully thanked for the incredible process that brought us all into existence. Thus, human beings are exceptional in having the responsibility through their limited conscious free will in choosing whether or not to do the same as the rest of Creation and obey God's laws in their intentions, attitudes, words and deeds. However, whether they like it or not, their bodies obey those same "natural" laws! The free will of human beings is a test for them, to see who will obey God's commands and who will disobey. To obey, they must fulfill their responsibilities as God's appointed (*Khulafa*) custodians/stewards of the Earth, including protecting, restoring and sustainably managing the rainforests, and respecting the indigenous communities whose livelihoods depend upon their natural surroundings.
4. **Human beings are stewards and custodians of the Earth.** God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, has appointed humanity as His agent and inheritor (*Khalifah*) to act as a steward/custodian by looking after everything according to God's commands. God's Creation, including plants and animals, has been put under the power of human beings for them to use, but they must only do so within the limits set by God. "It is He (God) who has made you (His) *Khalifah* in 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," (Qur'an 6:165).
5. **The rainforests are the signs of God's Creation (*ayaat al-kawniyyah*).** The stability of rainforests when left undisturbed is a demonstration of the balance of Creation and is part of the primordial patterning of the Creator. "And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance. And the Earth He laid (out) for the creatures," (Qur'an 55:9-10). The rainforests are not playgrounds; in addition to sustaining varieties of living beings within their boundaries, they also supply the oxygen (O₂) we breathe, and store the carbon dioxide (CO₂) we emit. By performing these functions, the forests submit to the will of Allah. That is how nature works!
6. **The natural consequences in this life may be a reward or punishment from God.** All good is from God, and all evil and mischief is allowed by God to show us the results of the misuse of our free will. If humans disobey God's laws, He only lets them taste a part of these negative consequences, and He is patient before punishing them more severely, to give people a chance to turn back to, and obey Him. "Corruption has flourished on land and sea as a result of people's actions and He will make them taste the consequences of some of their own actions so that they may turn back," (Qur'an 30: 41). "Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many of them He grants forgiveness," (Qur'an 42:30). Therefore the punishment, in the form of mischief and misfortune, is a test of faith, to make us look at our lives and turn back to God, seeking forgiveness, asking for his help and improving our behavior. The reward of abundance and ease is a test of faith as well, to see whether those rewarded become arrogant and forget God, or are grateful to Him and keep serving Him.

7. **The Day of God's Judgment of all souls.** A central belief of Muslims is that there will be a Day of Judgment, when all souls that have 'passed away' from their Earthly life will be resurrected with their bodies and raised to life again. Each person will then be held individually accountable for the degree to which they sought, acknowledged, spoke, and lived by the Truth of God's Word. They will also be judged upon whether, when they had the opportunity to make informed choices, they obeyed God, in everything, big and small, that they had power or influence over, and therefore had responsibility for. The just and merciful outcome will be either the reward of living for eternity in Paradise and being close to God, or the punishment of Hell and being distanced from God.
8. **Muslims do not fulfill all their desires, trying to create Paradise on Earth.** Islam is a way of taming and reducing worldly desires through adopting an ethic of restraint and conservation and striving to live according to our basic needs. Therefore, practicing Islam should reduce consumerism and the excessive burdens that it places on nature, including the destruction of the rainforests and the subjugation of indigenous communities. Muslims, however, should work to establish the laws of God, which help to bring out the best potential of humans. These laws include caring for and managing the environment responsibly, as well as preserving the beautiful and holy signs of God in nature (*ayaat al-kawniyyah*) for us to reflect on and learn from. Indeed, it is our religious and moral duty to protect and care for the environment, including the rainforests and indigenous peoples. Rules and regulations governing the interaction between human beings and the natural environment can be found in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition.
9. **What is human accountability on this Earth?** In many situations, injustice occurs due to lack of accountability. Muslims believe all humans are held accountable by God, and are judged by God, so that there are consequences in this life and the Hereafter for all our decisions and actions. Therefore, even if good environmental projects cannot continue, or disasters occur, a believing Muslim with knowledge should continue to strive and to do his or her best to apply Islamic principles, not losing heart, and planning with optimism and hope for the future, with the conviction that God is watching and expecting us to keep doing our best. The Earth is not eternal. And to have hope is synthesized in the saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), "If the Day of Judgment (the Final Hour) comes when one of you is holding a seedling in his hand, if you are able to plant it before the Day arrives, do so." (Hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad and Imam al-Bukhari).

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS (SALAT/DU'A)

SUPPLICATION FOR PROTECTION FROM CALAMITY (DU'A ABU DARDA)

This prayer was taught by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) to his companion, Abu Darda, for absolute security and protection from calamity.

Allaahumma, anta rabbi, laa ilaaha illaa Anta, 'alaika tawakkaltu wa anta rabbul 'arshil kariymi maashaa Allaahu kaana wa maLam yasha' lam yakuw-wa laa hawla wa laa quwwata illaa bil-Laahil 'Aliyyil 'Aziym. A'lamu annallaaha 'alaa kulli shay in qadiyruw-wa annallaaha qad ahaata bikulli shay in 'almaaa. Allah-humma inni a'uthu bika min sharri nafsiy wa min sharri kulli daabbatin, anta aakhithum bi naasiyatihaa inna rabiy 'alaa siraatim-mustaqiym.

O Allah! You are my Lord, there is no deity besides You. I put my trust in You and You are the Lord of the Noble Throne. Whatever Allah wishes, happens. And whatever He does not wish, will not happen. And there is no power or defense except Allah's, the most High, the Greatest of all. I know that definitely Allah has power over everything and that Allah has encompassed everything in knowledge. O Allah, I ask Your protection against the evils of my nafs, and against the evils of all living things, that You only have complete power over them. Verily my Lord is on the right path.

DU'A WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

Allaahumma 'innee 'as'aluka khayrahaa, wa 'a'oothu bika min sharrihaa.

O Allah, I ask You for the good of it and seek refuge in You against its evil.

Allaahumma 'innee 'as'aluka khayrahaa, wa khayra maa feehaa, wa khayra maa 'ursilat bihi wa a'oothu bika min sharrihaa, wa sharri maa feehaa, wa sharri maa 'ursilat bihi.

O Allah, I ask You for the good of it, for the good of what it contains, and for the good of what is sent with it. I seek refuge in You from the evil of it, from the evil of what it contains, and from the evil that is sent with it.

DU'A WHEN IT THUNDERS

Subhaanal-lathee yusabbihur-ra'du bihamdihi walmalaa'ikatu min kheefatihi.

Glory is to Him Whom thunder and angels glorify due to fear of Him.

Allaahumma 'aghithnaa, Allaahumma 'aghithnaa, Allaahumma 'aghithnaa

O Allah, send us rain. O Allah, send us rain. O Allah, send us rain.

Allaahum-masqi 'ibaadaka, wa bahaa'imaka, wanshur rahmataka, wa 'ahyi baladakal-mayyita

O Allah, give water to Your slaves, and Your livestock, and spread Your mercy, and revive Your dead land.

INVOCATION FOR WHEN IT RAINS

Allaahumma sayyiban naafi'an.
O Allah, (bring) beneficial rain clouds.

SUPPLICATION AFTER IT RAINS

Mutirnaa bifadhillaahi wa rahmatih.
It has rained by the bounty of Allah and His mercy.

INVOCATION FOR THE WITHHOLDING OF THE RAIN

Allaahumma hawaalaynaa wa laa 'alaynaa. Allaahumma 'alal-'aakaami wadh-dhiraabi, wa butoonil-'awdiyati,
wa manaabitish-shajari.
O Allah, let it pass us and not fall upon us, but upon the hills and mountains, and the center of the valleys,
and upon the forested lands.

PRAYER FOR SEEKING RAIN (SALAT AL-ISTISQA')

This prayer is used when seeking rain from Allah during times of drought. The imam prays, with the followers, two raka'at (unit) during any time except those times in which it is not desirable to pray. In the first raka'ah, the imam recites Surah Al-A'la after Surah Al-Fatihah. And in the second raka'ah, he reads Surah Al-Ghashiyah after Surah Al-Fatihah, and he delivers a khutbah before or after the prayer. As soon as he finishes the khutbah, people face the qiblah (direction of prayer facing Ka'bah in Mecca) and supplicate to Allah. This prayer was first introduced by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) in Medina in the sacred month of Ramadan of the 6th Hijra year.

"O Allah, give us rain. O Allah, give us rain. O Allah, give us rain – O Allah, around us and not upon us. O Allah, make it upon the hills, small mountains, bottom of the valleys, and plantations." (Hadith reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

"O Allah, give us a saving rain, productive, plentiful, general, continuous. O Allah, give us rain and do not make us among the despondent. O Allah, (Your) slaves, land, animals, and (Your) Creation all are suffering and seek protection. And we do not complain except to You. O Allah, let our crops grow, and let the udders be refilled. Give us from the blessings of the sky and grow for us from the blessings of the earth. O Allah, remove from us the hardship, starvation, and barrenness and remove the affliction from us as no one removes afflictions save Thee. O Allah, we seek Your forgiveness as You are the Forgiving, and send upon us plenteous rains." (Hadith reported by Ibn Majah and Abu Dawud)

PRAYER (DU'A) (ADAPTED FROM A PRAYER FROM THE SANCTUARY CENTER)

This prayer (<https://www.arrcc.org.au/reflect-prayers-islamic>) was inspired and adapted from a prayer taken from The Sanctuary Center.

God says in the Qur'an that He will respond to our prayers (Qur'an 2:186; 40:60) and that du'a (supplication) is an essential component of Islam. In fact, God says that those who do not invoke Him will enter Hell in humiliation. Du'a brings us closer to God; it helps us to acknowledge that He alone can grant us our wishes, and it helps us to recognize our shortcomings. Through prayer we can also recommit ourselves to the task of caring for Creation and remembering the poor who are most affected by climate change.

“O Allah: You are the Creator, the All-Powerful, the Sustainer of all life.

Forgive us for being careless with Your earth, that you created in perfect measure and balance.

Forgive us for not recognizing the wisdom in the Creation of every species.

Forgive us for taking and using your Creation to satisfy our selfish desires, rather than our needs.

Forgive us for being indifferent to the consequences of our treatment of Your Creation.

Forgive our greed and carelessness, which has altered the perfect measure and balance You created, and has caused many of our Brothers and Sisters in humanity to suffer.

Please forgive us Ya-Ghaffar (O All-Forgiving One).

Thank you for allowing us to recognize our shortcomings, our mistakes and our purpose in life

Thank you for inspiring the light of belief in our hearts.

Thank you for showing us the right path and inspiring us to take a step closer to You by loving Your Creation and wanting to look after it.

O Allah, change us now into what you will be pleased with.

Inspire us to love and care for every part of Your Creation.

Allow us to change our habits to care for every species.

Allow us to encourage others to care for your Creation.

Allow us to recognize that caring for Your Creation is obeying Your Commands and following the actions of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him).

Allow us to implement the commandments in Your Qur'an, not to waste and not to alter Your balance.

Allow us to take seriously the role You have given us to be Your *khulafa* (steward).

Allow us to recognize the perfection in all You have Created.

Allow us to implement the practices of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) by caring for all species, planting trees, valuing each resource and being grateful for the use of any of Your Creation for our needs.

O Allah, protect the people living with the effects of climate change now and give them strength. Give patience and strength to those facing rising temperatures, drought, water shortages, unpredictable weather, failed crops, flooding, land loss and salination of vital water supplies.

O Allah, allow all people everywhere to recognize the importance of protecting and maintaining Your Creation. Allow our politicians and leaders to act in the best interests of all nations today, and all people in the future, in order to avoid catastrophic changes.

O Allah please allow a generation of leaders who will be willing to act justly so that those who have contributed so little to the problems we are facing, and have fewer resources with which to face it, are not left to shoulder our burden.

O Allah, fill the hearts of those who lead rich nations – give them your mercy and compassion on poor countries already suffering the effects of a changing climate. Just as they have been moved to cancel debt in the past, encourage them also to release funds so that poor communities can adapt to the effects of climate change, and develop cleanly.

Oh Allah, Help us to tread lightly and use wisely, valuing the needs of others, and of Creation, above our own desires. Challenge us where we need to change our lifestyles, convict us when we need to speak out on behalf of a voiceless people, or world.

And soften us where we have stood in judgment of others.

O Allah, change us and use us in ways you are pleased with, for the restoration of your world, and the protection of all your children.”

PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

This prayer (https://www.mohammedamin.com/Community_issues/Muslim-prayer-for-the-nation.html) was written and edited by key British Muslim figures, including: Dr Waqar Azmi OBE, Imam Shahid Raza OBE, Mustafa Field MBE and Maulana Qamaruzzaman Azmi.

British Muslims have not yet developed the custom of praying regularly for the well-being of their nation. However a group of British Muslims has written a Muslim Prayer for the Nation, and given permission for it to be reproduced freely.

“O Lord, unite our nation around the principles of justice, peace, love and faith. Put peace and love in our hearts for the diversity that makes our nation so beautiful.

Most Merciful, we pray for our nation to remain tolerant and loving, remove prejudice from our hearts, and allow us to love our brothers and sisters in humanity.

Allow our Government to remain accountable to the people, give them vision and wisdom, as they take decisions affecting peace in our world so that they may uphold peace in the world, advance the welfare of our nation and deal kindly and justly with all our communities.

O Lord, Most Strong, give us the strength to protect and care for our neighbors.

Make our hearts and minds aware of our heritage, fulfilling duties and responsibilities as a citizen.

Lord, Most Merciful, allow us to show kindness to those most vulnerable in society.

Protect us from evil, inspire and guide us in defending those open to abuse.

Lord, Most Generous, allow us to give in charitable activity, and to help those most in need.

Make us more conscious of what is not good for us.

Lord, Most Merciful, Most Generous, please give us the patience to continue to learn from one another and work towards a more peaceful and kind world.

Make our hearts generous so that we may treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Help us to share that which we have with others, for your sake. Strengthen us, love us and be kind to us all.”

LESSON PLAN

ISLAMIC ETHIC ON PROTECTION, RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF RAINFORESTS

By Nana Firman

This lesson plan is an abridged version of a half-day, one-day, or two-day training session on the environmental ethics of Islam (note: each participant should have a copy of the lesson plan).

Introduction

Tropical forests globally continue to be in danger as a result of human activity. Although numerous forest restoration efforts in several countries are underway to address this environmental crisis, the rate of deforestation and forest degradation is still accelerating. Restoring forests poses political and economic challenges for many national governments. Letting forests grow back inevitably means pulling land out of agriculture/farming. On the other hand, the opportunity for natural regeneration elsewhere is still very limited. In some cases, the achievement of forest preservation has been related to ethical choices. One moral posture, anthropocentrism, which views human beings as central and the most significant species on the planet, is believed to be the primary cause of environmental degradation, including global deforestation.

Resources

- IRI Issue Primer: Tropical Forests: A Resource under Threat
- IRI Issue Primer: Tropical Forests and Climate Change
- IRI Issue Primer: Indigenous Peoples: Guardians of the Forests

Additional Resources (when applicable):

- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation/>
- <https://www.livescience.com/27692-deforestation.html>
- https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/deforestation_causes/

Objectives

- To address deforestation and forest degradation issues with the reconfiguration of an Islamic ethic of environmental stewardship.
- To understand what Islam teaches concerning one's obligations to the natural world, in particular for the protection and conservation of the rainforests, and for the well-being of indigenous peoples.

Goals

Through this session, participants will:

- Understand Islamic environmental stewardship – a model of morality that is ecocentric (the environment is the focal point) and theocentric (God is at the center).
- Comprehend the theocentric ethic, characterized by accountability to God and driven by Islamic creeds, in which God is the Creator and Sustainer of the Earth
- Define sustainable and accountable consumption of natural resources, taking a full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species.
- Realize the Islamic teachings regarding the role of the individual in protecting natural resources and the assets of the environment, especially the tropical forests.
- Deepen the concept of stewardship in Islam—humans are God’s stewards or trustee on Earth, charged with preserving the natural resources, wildlife and forests.
- Appreciate the ecological importance and functions of rainforests (the connection to global warming and climate change).
- Recognize the connection between the threat of deforestation and the subjugation of indigenous peoples.

Time: 60 minutes.

Materials

The Holy Qur’an with the translation, and the interpretation; colored markers, papers, tapes, and only if possible, Books of Hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan al-Nasa’i, Sunan Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad).

Procedure

00:00–00:03 → **OPENING PRAYER** and **INTRODUCTION**

Opening recitation: Surah Al-Fatihah (Qur’an 1:1-7) followed by Salawat/Durood Ibrahim.

Facilitator reads the introduction:

Our faith commitments are critical for how we perceive the world around us and our responsibilities as a citizen. Although a global environmental discourse that connects ecological themes with Islamic ethics and values has been underway for many years, global warming has become an existential issue for the natural order that requires urgent attention. Saving rainforests helps to absorb carbon dioxide and stabilize the Earth’s climate, while protecting the beautiful existence of countless plants and animals.

Divide participants into several small groups of 3-7 people each (depending on the number of participants), who will stay together throughout the session. Each group will select its speaker/presenter to share the group’s observations and inspirations at the end.

00:03–00:13 → **TAWHID** — Unity of God!

Facilitator:

Tawhid is the foundation of Islamic creed. It teaches the uniqueness and oneness and unity of God, the Creator, and provides the starting point to the discovery of His Creations (the natural world) and the need to protect and conserve them. However, we have failed in keeping His amanah (trust) that He placed in us. Today, the greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activity from activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and destruction of forests are causing Earth's atmosphere to warm and are driving dangerous climate change. With the crisis we face today, Muslims must ensure that the protection, restoration and sustainable management of the rainforests, and the well-being of their guardians, our indigenous brothers and sisters, are a central part of their lives.

Assign a different verse from the Qur'an to each group to address its meaning and/or to plan action steps or other implementation activities.

Selection of Qur'anic verses: (112:1-4), (1:1), (4:125), (59:24), (40:62), (27:64)

Guiding Questions: Even if climate change were not an issue, how should we treat these wonderful blessings that Allah has placed in our hands? How does caring for the environment, especially tropical forests and indigenous communities, become manifested in our imaan (faith)? What can we do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Please give examples (e.g. at individual, community or state level)!

Hadith reference:

"There is a reward in doing good to every living thing." (Sahih al-Bukhari 2466)

"If without good reason anyone kills a sparrow, or a creature lesser than that even, the living creature will put his complaint to God on the Day of Judgment, saying: so and so killed me for no purpose." (Sunan al-Nasa'i 4446)

00:13–00:23 → **FITRAH** — Back to nature!

Facilitator:

Fitrah is described as the natural state, the natural pattern, or simply as nature. Some scholars describe *al-fitrah* as the pure state or the state of infinite goodness and point to the possibility that everything in Creation has a potential for goodness, the conscious expression of which rests uniquely with human kind. Indigenous communities around the world embody a rich and varied range of beliefs, cultural and spiritual practices, languages, kinship systems and traditional knowledge. A common trait amidst this diversity is a deep and intimate relationship with the land they inhabit and its resources, including the tropical forests.

Assign a different verse from the Qur'an to each group to address its meaning and/or to plan action steps or other implementation activities.

Selection of Qur'anic verses: (30:30), (6:79), (2:29), (40:57), (38:26), (6:38), (31:10), (6:142), (21:104)

Guiding Questions: How does the Islamic concept of fitra (natural state) apply to the rights of indigenous societies and the rainforests as an essential element for the continuation of life? Think of trees (green plants), oxygen, carbon dioxide, water, nutrients and biodiversity, as the purity of the natural world. Share your thought(s) on what needs to be done in order to protect the forests and the indigenous communities.

Hadith reference:

“Verily, Allah has recorded good and evil deeds and he made them clear. Whoever intends to perform a good deed but does not do it, Allah will record it as a complete good deed. If he intends to do it and does so, Allah Almighty will record it as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times as much or even more. If he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, Allah will record for him one complete good deed. If he does it, Allah will record for him a single evil deed.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6126, Sahih Muslim 131)

“The faith of a servant is not upright until his heart is upright, and his heart is not upright until his tongue is upright. A man will not enter Paradise if his neighbor is not secure from his evil.” (Musnad Ahmad 12636)

00:23–00:33 → **MIZAN** (balance) – Keep it up!

Facilitator: *Mizan* is the principle of balance on which all Creation works and maintains itself in a stable condition. Preserving the balance and stability of the ecosystems in the land and the sea helps us to conserve the environment. Forests are natural carbon storehouses. Through the natural process of photosynthesis, trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere where, in excess, it would contribute to climate change, and store it safely in their trunks, branches and leaves. When forests are burned, cut down or degraded, the stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere where it contributes to climate change. And 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions come mostly from Agriculture, Forest and Land Use – while agriculture is responsible for at least 80% of tropical deforestation. Thus, addressing deforestation, forest degradation and land use change are very critical to maintaining the *mizan* (balance).

Assign a different verse from the Qur’an to each group to its meaning and/or to plans action steps or other implementation activities.

Selection of Qur’anic verses: (55:1–9), (25:2), (16:48–49), (16:4)

Guiding Questions: What is the significant cause of deforestation and forest degradation? What are the consequences for transgressing the natural boundaries? What should be done in order to stay safely within the limit of these boundaries? Please give example(s)! (e.g., in individual consumption, lifestyle choices, community values, or development strategies).

Hadith reference:

“The son of Adam cannot fill a vessel worse than his stomach, as it is enough for him to take a few bites to straighten his back. If he cannot do it, then he may fill it with a third of his food, a third of his drink, and a third of his breath.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 2380)

“Do not waste water even if you were at a running stream.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 425)

00:33–00:43 → **KHALIFA** (stewards) – Take responsibility!

Facilitator: As God’s *khalifa* (steward, inheritor, successor) upon the Earth, human beings have a role to play in preserving and maintaining God’s Creation. Humans are obliged to protect the environment, including the rainforest, and not to destroy it. Indigenous communities’ land management practices and their local and traditional knowledge lend themselves to effective and sustainable stewardship of the forests they live in and use. They create wildlife sanctuaries around sacred sites by restricting hunting, and they monitor the use of resources on which they are dependent, which fosters sustainable management. Such practices are very similar to the concept of *hima* (environmental conservation zone) and *harim* (water resources protection zone) within the Islamic tradition.

Assign a different verse from the Qur’an to each group to address its meaning and/or to plans action steps or other implementation activities.

Selection of Qur’anic verses: (6:165), (3:104), (4:135), (5:48), (33:72), (30:41); (6:141); (5:87)

Guiding Questions: How can we live up to our responsibilities as caretakers of the Earth, in particular to protect the tropical forests? How can the Islamic tradition and Islamic law support indigenous communities to protect, restore and sustainably manage tropical forests, such as through mutual collaboration in the implementation of *hima* and *harim* concepts, as well as the *awqaf* system (e.g. *waqf*-based forestry). Please explore any other possibilities for religious groups to support indigenous peoples and to protect the tropical forests in your country!

Hadith reference:

“The world is sweet and green (alluring) and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerent in it in order to see how you act.” (Sahih Muslim 2742)

“Each of you is a shepherd and will be answerable for those under his care.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 6719, Sahih Muslim 1829)

00:43–00:50 → **CONSOLIDATE**

Each group discusses and consolidates internally their understanding along with ideas/thoughts/plans/actions/implementations for protection, restoration, and sustainable management of the rainforests and indigenous peoples, based on the references and inspirations from the Qur’anic verses.

00:50–00:58 → **SHARING**

Each group speaker/presenter shares with all participants the highlight(s) of his or her group discussion and the inspiration(s) from the Qur’anic verses that motivate them to take action and inspire them to invite others to protect the rainforests and indigenous peoples.

00:58–01:00 → **REFLECTION** and **CLOSING PRAYER**

Facilitator shares this hadith on the parable of society like being on the ship together: *“The parable of those who respect the limits of Allah and those who violate them is that of people who board a ship after casting lots, some of them residing in its upper deck and others in its lower deck. When those in the lower deck want water, they pass by the upper deck and say: If we tear a hole in the bottom of the ship, we will not harm those above us. If those in the upper deck let them do what they want, they will all be destroyed together. If they restrain them, they will all be saved together.”* (Sahih al-Bukhari 2361)

Facilitator reads the closing reflection: Muslims need to understand the relationship between religion and environment. Islam requires not only the observance of rites and rituals, but also taking personal responsibility for the world. Environmental dialogs, such as the importance of tropical forest protection and conservation, could start to take root in mosques and/or Islamic institutions, and these institutions could begin to engage with indigenous peoples and environmental organizations as well. And remember that the rainforest also provides us with many valuable medicinal plants, and may be the source of cures from deadly diseases.

Closing recitation: Surah Al-Asr (Qur'an 103:1-3)



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RAINFOREST
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