



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Climate Change as a Moral and Political Challenge: An Islamic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, raising complex questions about its origins and solutions. This paper seeks to explore whether climate change is fundamentally a consequence of a moral crisis or a political crisis. To address this dilemma, the study adopts a religious perspective, drawing insights from the Holy Quran alongside scientific research and environmental activism. The first section of this paper examines Quranic teachings related to environmental stewardship, sustainability, and human responsibility, aiming to uncover the spiritual and ethical dimensions of ecological crises. Quranic verses that emphasize balance (mizān), corruption (fasād), and human accountability (khilāfah) will be analyzed to identify the root causes of environmental degradation from an Islamic perspective. In addition to theological discourse, this study incorporates the perspectives of leading climate scientists who have made significant contributions to understanding climate change, its causes, and its socio-political implications. The insights of environmental activists advocating for urgent climate action will also be explored, providing a broader view of the interplay between moral responsibility, political decision-making, and ecological preservation. By synthesizing religious, scientific, and activist viewpoints, this paper aims to provide a holistic understanding of the climate crisis, shedding light on the underlying causes and offering insights into potential pathways toward solutions.

## INTRODUCTION

### Qur'anic Teaching on the Environment

The Holy Qur'an provides profound insights into the significance of environmental stewardship and human responsibility toward nature. Divine guidance emphasizes the balance and harmony in creation, urging believers to avoid wastefulness and corruption on earth. This chapter explores Qur'anic perspectives on environmental protection, highlighting the moral and ethical imperatives of preserving nature. The Qur'an describes the earth as a divinely created system that sustains life through a perfect balance. Allah states:

"It is He (Allah) who created gardens, trellised and untrellised, date palms, crops of different shape and taste, olives, and pomegranates, similar (in kind) yet different (in taste). Eat of their fruit when they ripen, but pay their due on the day of harvest, and do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not love those who waste." (Surah Al-An'am: 141) <sup>1</sup>

Imam Tabari, in his commentary on this verse, explains: "This is a declaration from the Exalted Allah about the blessings He has bestowed upon mankind from His grace, serving as a reminder to acknowledge His kindness. Allah created gardens, grapevines, and plants that yield fruits of different colors, tastes, and fragrances, even though they grow in the same soil and are nourished by the same water. He commands people to consume from these blessings with gratitude and warns against wastefulness, as excessiveness leads to harm and deprivation of others." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am, 6:141.

<sup>2</sup> Tabari, M. I. J. (1985). *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an* (Vol. 12, p. 155). Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.

This verse not only acknowledges the diversity and abundance in nature but also underscores the ethical obligation to use natural resources responsibly. Wastefulness is condemned, aligning with modern sustainability principles that advocate for the mindful consumption of environmental resources. The noble verse informs us about the magnificent environment that the Almighty Allah has prepared for mankind, filled with a variety of trees, fruits, and different types of plants. Besides the essential nutritional benefits these trees and plants provide, they also offer humans visual pleasure through their diverse and vibrant colors.

**Another passage further reinforces this theme:**

"(My Lord) is the One who made the earth a cradle for you, opened pathways upon it for your benefit, and sent down rain from the sky, allowing various types of plants to grow. Eat from them and let your livestock graze as well. Indeed, in all of this, there are signs for those who use their intellect." (Surah Ta-Ha: 53-54)<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an consistently refers to the earth as a cradle, symbolizing its nurturing role in sustaining life. It emphasizes that both humans and animals are beneficiaries of Allah's provisions. This divine system ensures that nature continues to support life, reinforcing the interconnectedness between humanity and the environment. In these two verses as well, the Quran teaches us about the vital role of the environment for both humans and animals, referring to it as a "**cradle**". It reiterates the countless blessings that Allah has granted to mankind on earth. Not only humans but also animals benefit from this divine design, as Allah created the earth to be the best possible environment for human life in this world. Nature provides many benefits to humanity. From the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat, nature enhances our well-being and freely provides the essential resources needed for our survival.<sup>4</sup> Global interest in environmental issues has significantly increased over the past fifty years, particularly in the last decade, as the media has continuously contributed to emphasizing topics related to the environment, especially climate change. This has helped shift environmental concerns to different regions affected by environmental problems.<sup>5</sup>

The environment is the space in which humans carry out their daily activities, and without it, human existence would not be possible.<sup>6</sup> From an economic perspective, the environment supports industries such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, which are essential for human sustenance. Studies estimate that the total annual value of ecosystem services provided by nature exceeds \$125 trillion.<sup>7</sup> However, the reckless exploitation of natural resources for short-term economic gains threatens this delicate balance.

As environmentalist Jane Goodall aptly states: "We are not separate from nature; we are part of nature."<sup>8</sup>

Recognizing this intrinsic relationship encourages individuals to respect and protect their surroundings rather than exploit them for personal gain. "(From the earth) We created you, and to it, We shall return you, and from it, We shall bring you forth once again." (Ta-Ha: 55)

**This noble verse clearly illustrates our connection with the earth.** The earth is our homeland; it is our great mother. The reason is simple: from it, we were created, to it, we will return, and from it, we will be brought forth once again. If a person wishes to develop respect for the environment in which they live, the easiest way to do so is by believing that they are a part of the

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an, Surah Taha, 20:53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Our Safety Net. (2020, March 12). *Why is nature so important for humans?* <https://www.oursafetynet.org/2020/03/12/why-is-nature-so-important-for-humans/>

<sup>5</sup> Hulme, K. (2020, April 20). *Taking care to protect the environment against damage: A meaningless obligation?* Corte IDH. <https://mawdoo3.com>

<sup>6</sup> Mjedi78903733. (2018, May 5). *The journey begins.* <https://mjedi78903733.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/the-journey-begins/>

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, K. (n.d.). *Valuing nature.* WWF-UK. Retrieved from <https://www.wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/valuing-nature>

<sup>8</sup> Smore Science Staff. (2024, March 5). *Best nature quotes.* <https://www.smorescience.com/best-nature-quotes/>

earth and that the earth is a part of them. This simple yet powerful statement reminds us of our place within the natural world, urging us to recognize our role in preserving it.<sup>9</sup>

### **Prophetic Lessons on Nature Protection**

The Qur'an not only describes the blessings of nature but also warns against human actions that lead to its degradation. Prophets were sent to guide people toward ethical behavior, including the proper treatment of the environment. For example, Prophet Shu'ayb (peace be upon him) admonished his people, warning them against injustice and corruption:

"And to Midian, We sent their brother Shu'ayb. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. So, give full measure and weight in justice, and do not defraud people of their due, nor cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right. This is best for you if you are truly believers.'" (Surah Al-A'raf: 85)<sup>10</sup>

### **Similarly, Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) conveyed Allah's command:**

"He is the One who created you from the earth and settled you upon it. So seek His forgiveness and repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near (in His mercy) and responsive (to prayers)!" (Surah Hud: 61)<sup>11</sup>

These verses highlight the divine mandate to uphold justice and prevent destruction on earth. The phrase "do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation" is particularly significant, emphasizing that Allah originally created the earth in a perfect state, and human actions should not disrupt its balance. The same message is echoed through multiple prophets, including Moses (peace be upon him) and the final Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), reinforcing the principle of environmental stewardship. This command of Shu'ayb (peace be upon him), "and do not commit excesses as corrupters on the earth!", was repeatedly instructed by Allah (Exalted and Glorious) in the Qur'an: Al-'Ankabut: 36, Hud: 85, Al-A'raf: 85, Ash-Shu'ara: 183, and through Salih (peace be upon him) in Al-A'raf: 74, and through Musa (peace be upon him) in Surah Al-Baqarah: 60. Likewise, through the last Messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him), He conveyed this command: "Do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation, and invoke Him with fear (of His punishment) and hope (for His mercy). Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good." (Al-A'raf, 7:56)

Islamic teachings emphasize that the earth is an Amanah (trust) bestowed upon humanity. People are not its owners but its stewards, responsible for its preservation for future generations. Even Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), the first Caliph of Islam, forbade the unnecessary cutting of trees during warfare, demonstrating the importance of environmental ethics even in times of conflict.

### **The Qur'an further elaborates on the earth's perfect design:**

"And He placed on it firm mountains, blessed it, and determined its sustenance within it." (Surah Fussilat: 10)

The balance established by Allah ensures that ecosystems function harmoniously. Human intervention should aim at sustaining this balance rather than disrupting it through greed and exploitation. It was established with a perfect system containing everything, especially human beings, who are the highest creatures that Allah placed on the earth and for whom He created everything in it. He strengthened this system with laws revealed through the tongues of His messengers, the pious, and the wise among His servants. These individuals were supported by divine revelation, inspiration, success, and wisdom. They taught people how to use what is on earth to obtain benefits, remove harms that may exist within beneficial things, and avoid damages from harmful ones. Thus, this is the original system and the law that reinforces it—both are

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:85.

<sup>11</sup> Qur'an, Surah Hud, 11:61.

means of reformation on earth. The first is the creation of beneficial things, and the second is making harmful things beneficial through improvement or removal.<sup>12</sup>

The Almighty Lord forbids His servants from causing corruption on the earth, as He has perfected it with the benefits and order He established in it. He also guided people on how to utilize it in the best way, benefiting from its resources and all that it contains, as He has subjected it to them. Dr. Es'ad states: **"Destruction includes everything that corrupts minds and beliefs, personal morals, livelihood, and common means such as agriculture, trade, and industry."**<sup>13</sup> Despite the vital importance of the environment for humans—and the fact that **Allah (Exalted and Glorious) entrusted it to humankind in its perfect form, with an ideal climate**—modern and industrialized man has turned a deaf ear to this issue. Now, all of us—**religious and non-religious, ordinary citizens and scientists, the wealthy and the poor**—are suffering the consequences of **climate change**. And the blame is ours.

This is confirmed by **the Creator of the earth in the Qur'an**, where He states:

**"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that He may let them taste a part of what they have done, that perhaps they will return (to righteousness)". (Surah Ar-Rum:40)**<sup>14</sup>

Now, we all agree that climate change is caused by the destruction we have inflicted on the environment. Alongside the voices that have risen in recent decades calling for a change in our approach to the environment—accompanied by **hundreds of thousands of symposiums, books, and numerous TV and internet programs** addressing this crisis and its catastrophic consequences for humanity if no action is taken—the results have not been satisfactory. The daily news reports **massive floods in regions where there was previously not a single drop of rain during this season**. There are **abnormally high temperatures in places where they were once stable**. Despite increasing awareness of environmental issues, global efforts to combat climate change have yielded insufficient results. International conferences, scientific research, and activism have highlighted the urgency of the situation, yet meaningful action remains limited. News outlets continue to report extreme weather events, including unprecedented floods and rising temperatures in historically stable regions. The Qur'anic message is clear: environmental preservation is a moral duty, not merely a political or economic concern. Addressing climate change requires a shift in perspective—one that aligns with divine wisdom, scientific knowledge, and collective human responsibility. Thus, the Qur'an provides a comprehensive framework for environmental ethics, emphasizing balance, gratitude, and responsibility. It warns against wastefulness and corruption while calling for sustainable practices that ensure the well-being of all living beings. The current climate crisis is a testament to humanity's failure to uphold these principles. Urgent action, guided by religious, scientific, and ethical considerations, is necessary to restore harmony between humanity and nature. By embracing the Qur'anic teachings on environmental stewardship, individuals and societies can work towards a sustainable future—one that reflects the divine order and safeguards the planet for future generations.

### Climate Change as a Result of Political Crisis

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a major global crisis, exacerbating humanitarian emergencies such as heatwaves, wildfires, floods, tropical storms, and hurricanes. These disasters are growing in scale, frequency, and intensity, threatening the well-being of millions of people. Recent research estimates that 3.6 billion people already live in areas highly vulnerable to climate change (as of October 12, 2023).<sup>15</sup>

This raises a critical question: The apparent negligence of developed nations and the lack of political will to implement effective climate policies—combined with the absence of decisive action to curb environmental degradation—does this stem from a moral crisis or a political crisis?

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Ashur, M. T. (1984). *Et-Tahrir ve-t-Tenvir* (Vol. 8, p. 174). Tunisia: Dar Tunisiye.

<sup>13</sup> Humid, E. (n.d.). *Ejser et-Tefasir* (p. 1011). Mektebet esh-Shamile.

<sup>14</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum, **30:41**.

<sup>15</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Climate change and health*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

While the previous chapter explored the religious and ethical perspectives on environmental stewardship as outlined in the Holy Qur'an, this chapter examines the views of scientists, scholars, and activists on the political dimensions of climate change. There is overwhelming agreement within the scientific community that human activities are the primary driver of climate change.

"The overwhelming majority of actively publishing climate scientists—97 percent—agree that human activities are causing global warming and climate change."<sup>16</sup>

This consensus underscores the urgent need for government intervention and policy-driven solutions. However, despite clear evidence and pressing warnings from experts, political inaction continues to hinder effective climate responses.

Professor Pierre Chaigneau highlights the limitations of political responses to climate change: "We expect politicians to provide solutions for climate change, but there is only so much they can do. Beyond regulation, governments must remember the crucial role they play in promoting innovation."<sup>17</sup>

He also notes a paradox in climate governance: "Most Canadians agree that something must be done about climate change. However, despite immense pressure on politicians to take action, widespread dissatisfaction usually follows any measures they implement."<sup>18</sup>

This contradiction suggests that while citizens recognize the need for urgent environmental policies, political leaders struggle to balance economic, industrial, and environmental priorities, leading to ineffective or unpopular policies.

Climate change is not just an environmental crisis; it is fundamentally a political issue because:

Governments establish policies regulating carbon emissions, energy production, and environmental protections.

Political leaders determine investment levels in green energy and sustainable infrastructure.

Climate policies affect major economic sectors, leading to conflicts between corporate interests and environmental sustainability.

International climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, rely on political cooperation and commitment.

Ultimately, political will dictates the speed, effectiveness, and enforcement of climate policies at both national and global levels.<sup>19</sup> Individuals, businesses, and NGOs can influence climate change policy both directly and indirectly. Mechanisms include individual rhetoric, the general expression of public opinion through surveys, and mass protests. Historically, a significant portion of these protests has been against climate-friendly policies.<sup>20</sup> While governments hold the power to regulate environmental policies, public engagement plays a crucial role in shaping climate action. To begin with, surveys and protests influence climate policies by shifting public opinion and pressuring policymakers. However, a significant portion of climate protests worldwide opposes climate-friendly policies, often due to economic concerns, misinformation, or resistance from industries. Nevertheless, studies indicate that the lack of organized citizen

<sup>16</sup> NASA. (n.d.). *Do scientists agree on climate change?* Retrieved from <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/faq/do-scientists-agree-on-climate-change>

<sup>17</sup> Chaigneau, P. (2024, January 2). *Climate change solutions require collaboration between politicians, scientists, and entrepreneurs*. Queen's University Gazette. Retrieved from <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/climate-change-solutions>

<sup>18</sup> Chaigneau, P. (2024, January 2). *Climate change solutions require collaboration between politicians, scientists, and entrepreneurs*. Queen's University Gazette. Retrieved from <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/stories/climate-change-solutions>

<sup>19</sup> Leiserowitz, A. (n.d.). *Building public and political will for climate change action*. Yale Environment. Retrieved from <https://environment.yale.edu/>

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Politics of climate change*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_climate\\_change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_climate_change)



activism remains a major barrier to achieving large-scale environmental reforms. Yet, research<sup>21</sup> suggests that public mobilization could significantly influence climate policy. A study on climate activism in the United States found that:

7% (3.7 million people) are actively involved in campaigns urging political leaders to reduce global warming.

28% (14.8 million people) would definitely join such campaigns.

37% (19.6 million people) say they might participate.

This data suggests that over 53 million Americans could form a powerful climate movement if properly organized and mobilized. However, compared to other social justice movements, climate activism remains fragmented and underutilized.<sup>22</sup>

Other authors such as Robert Mizio, argues that climate change is fundamentally political: "If we consider David Easton's definition of politics as 'the authoritative allocation of values'—meaning the distribution of resources, wealth, and power—climate change is inherently a political issue."<sup>23</sup>

Mizio highlights key political dimensions of climate change:

Global justice and equity: Developing nations bear the brunt of climate change despite contributing the least to global emissions.

Economic and security interests: Governments prioritize industrial growth over environmental sustainability.

Intergenerational responsibility: Current political inaction will have catastrophic consequences for future generations.<sup>24</sup>

These factors reinforce the idea that climate change is not just a scientific issue—it is a power struggle that reflects deep inequalities in the global political system.

A study conducted by the University of California, analyzed 100,000 possible future policies and emission trajectories to identify key political and social drivers of climate change.<sup>25</sup> The findings revealed that: political institutional responses are among the biggest factors in determining future carbon emissions; public perceptions, lobbying efforts, and social movements significantly impact the success or failure of climate policies; and technological advancements alone are not enough—political leadership is essential in implementing and enforcing sustainable solutions.<sup>26</sup> Politicians and government policies play a significant role in environmental degradation. Irresponsible economic development, driven by political factors, can lead to the deterioration of environmental quality and damage to ecological structures and processes. Political factors refer to the actions, decisions, and policies of governments, political parties, and interest groups that impact various projects and initiatives. For example, political factors may include changes in laws and regulations, tax policies and trade agreements, subsidies and sanctions, stability and security and international relations.<sup>27</sup> These factors shape the regulatory and economic environment, influencing how governments and industries respond to challenges like climate change, environmental protection, and sustainability.

<sup>21</sup> Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. (n.d.). *Climate change in the American mind*. Retrieved from <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/climate-change-in-the-american-mind/>

<sup>22</sup> Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. (n.d.). *Climate change in the American mind*. Retrieved from <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/climate-change-in-the-american-mind/>

<sup>23</sup> Japan Times. (2024, April 17). Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/2024/04/17/world>

<sup>24</sup> Japan Times. (2024, April 17). Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/2024/04/17/world>

<sup>25</sup> Kerlin, K. (2022, February 16). *The social and political determinants of global warming in the 21st century*. UC Davis. Retrieved from <https://www.ucdavis.edu/climate/news/how-politics-society-and-tech-shape-path-climate-change>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> LinkedIn. (n.d.). *What are the six factors that identify PESTLE analysis?* Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/1/what-six-factors-identify-pestle-analysis->

Furthermore, the Paris Agreement establishes long-term goals to guide all nations in significantly reducing global greenhouse gas emissions to keep global temperature rise below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and continuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This acknowledges that such limitations would substantially reduce the risks and impacts of climate change. Other goals of the Paris Agreement are to periodically assess collective progress toward achieving the agreement's goal and its long-term objectives and to provide financial support to developing countries to help them mitigate climate change, enhance resilience, and improve their capacity to adapt to climate impacts.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, the climate crisis is not just a scientific or ethical issue—it is a political problem. Governments play a decisive role in shaping climate policies, but economic interests, political agendas, and lack of public mobilization continue to obstruct meaningful progress. Without strong political will, international cooperation, and sustained activism, the world will remain on a dangerous path toward environmental catastrophe.

### The Moral Responsibility of Policy-Makers

Since the early 1970s, climate activists have consistently emphasized the need for stronger political action to combat climate change. Their efforts have sought to challenge entrenched financial and political interests that prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term environmental sustainability. In 1970, the first Earth Day became a milestone environmental movement, advocating for the protection of all life on Earth.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, climate activists continue to push for policies that limit fossil fuel production, which remains the leading cause of climate change.<sup>30</sup>

The moral dimension of climate action is increasingly being recognized, as highlighted by Time Magazine (2022): "Climate change will harm people worldwide, yet political systems struggle to frame it as a matter of right and wrong. Increasing moral awareness could motivate broader public support for urgent climate action."<sup>31</sup>

This perspective underscores the ethical obligation of governments, institutions, and individuals to act decisively to prevent irreversible environmental damage. Many scholars argue that moral responsibility for climate action should not be limited to governments but should be shared among individuals and institutions. Miller (2011) contends that governments have a moral duty to address climate change, but this duty extends to their citizens as well.<sup>32</sup> The ethical obligation to protect the environment should be distributed among members of society based on their institutional roles and capacities. This argument suggests that climate action is not just a political necessity—it is a collective moral imperative. Philosopher Stephen Gardiner explores the moral shortcomings that prevent governments from treating climate change with the urgency it demands. He argues that: "There is an excessive tendency to think that if the government hasn't solved it, then it's nobody's problem."<sup>33</sup>

This mindset leads to climate inaction, as governments shift responsibility while individuals remain passive. Gardiner identifies three key moral failures in climate governance:<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2015, December 12). *UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) and the Paris Agreement*. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

<sup>29</sup> Wikipedia contributors. (n.d.). *Climate movement*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_movement)

<sup>30</sup> Vox. (2023, September 21). *Climate protests and activism during UN Climate Week*. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/climate/2023/9/21/23879312/climate-protests-activism-un-climate-week>

<sup>31</sup> The Time, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Wiley Online Library. (n.d.). *Climate change research*. Retrieved from <https://wires.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcc>

<sup>33</sup> Gardiner, S. (2022, August 9). *Climate change is a moral crisis. But our political system doesn't treat it that way*. Time Magazine. Retrieved from <https://time.com>

<sup>34</sup> Gardiner, S. (2022, August 9). *Climate change is a moral crisis. But our political system doesn't treat it that way*. Time Magazine. Retrieved from <https://time.com>

The first one is institutional shortcomings. He maintains that governments and international bodies struggle to address climate change because climate policies require long-term commitment, while political agendas focus on short-term economic gains. Many governments prioritize economic and energy security over climate action, as seen in summer 2022, when U.S. and European leaders compromised on climate policies in response to inflation and energy crises. Another reason is that political institutions are designed for national interests, making it difficult to address a problem that affects all of humanity and future generations.

The second failure is the intergenerational ethical dilemma. Gardiner argues that climate change is a unique moral challenge because the worst effects of climate change will not be felt by current generations but by future ones. Furthermore, current leaders and citizens lack direct incentives to make sacrifices for the benefit of people who do not yet exist and in return this allows governments to delay action, despite knowing that the longer they wait, the more severe the consequences will be.

The third one is individual responsibility and the need for institutional reform. Gardiner calls for citizen-driven efforts to reform and build better institutions.

Religious leaders have also framed climate change as an ethical and moral crisis. Pope Francis, in his landmark environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*, declared that: "Climate change is an urgent moral crisis requiring a bold cultural revolution."<sup>35</sup>

Pope's message emphasized the moral obligation of individuals, businesses, and governments to protect the planet and the ethical responsibility of wealthy nations to support poorer countries, which suffer the most from climate change despite contributing the least to global emissions. Pope speaks also about the interconnectedness of environmental destruction, poverty, and social injustice, calling for a radical shift in economic and political priorities. By positioning climate action as a moral duty, Pope Francis adds a spiritual dimension to the discourse, appealing to global values of compassion, justice, and responsibility.

Journalists too have been vocal on this subject. John Humphrys raises an important question about the impact of moral appeals in climate activism: "Is climate change a moral crisis? Or could it be that everyone is already aware of the crisis facing the planet as a result of climate change, and we, the middle class, are doing what we can?"<sup>36</sup>

This reflects a growing concern that moral arguments alone may not be sufficient to drive large-scale change. Humphrys questions whether repeated moral messaging has lost its influence; whether those who care about climate change have already adjusted their lifestyles, while those who remain inactive are unlikely to be persuaded by further moral appeals and whether endless advocacy without systemic change could even be counterproductive, causing climate fatigue among the public.<sup>37</sup> While moral awareness is crucial, Humphrys' critique highlights the need for practical solutions by suggesting structural changes in energy policies, corporate accountability, and governmental action as necessary to achieve significant climate goals and that the moral responsibility should be complemented by legal and economic incentives to enforce sustainable practices at a broader level.

To conclude, the climate crisis is not merely a scientific or political issue—it is a moral challenge that demands urgent action from governments, institutions, and individuals. Ultimately, moral responsibility alone is not enough—climate action requires systemic reform, public engagement, and sustained political pressure to ensure meaningful, lasting solutions.

### **The Role of Climate Activism in Combating Climate Change**

<sup>35</sup> CBS News. (n.d.). *Global warming turning Earth into an immense pile of filth, Pope says in radical manifesto*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/global-warming-turning-earth-into-immense-pile-of-filth-pope-says-in-radical-manifesto/>

<sup>36</sup> YouGov. (2024, March 8). *John Humphrys: Is climate change a moral crisis?* Politics & Current Affairs. Retrieved from <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48889-john-humphrys-climate-change-moral-crisis>

<sup>37</sup> YouGov. (2024, March 8). *John Humphrys: Is climate change a moral crisis?* Politics & Current Affairs. Retrieved from <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/48889-john-humphrys-climate-change-moral-crisis>



As the climate crisis intensifies, global civil society has played a crucial role in advocating for stronger environmental policies and sustainable solutions. One of the most influential networks leading this effort is the **CAN (Climate Action Network)**. CAN<sup>38</sup> is a **global coalition of over 1,900 civil society organizations from more than 130 countries**. It is dedicated to **coordinating and mobilizing grassroots efforts** to push for stronger climate policies and social justice. CAN plays a vital role in **UN climate negotiations and other global forums**, advocating for ambitious and enforceable climate policies. The network also works on developing and promoting **equitable and sustainable climate policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** and enhance climate resilience. Furthermore, CAN engages in **educational campaigns, grassroots activism, and policy research**, ensuring that **civil society voices** are heard in climate governance. Through these efforts, CAN has emerged as a **powerful force in the fight against climate change**, bridging the gap between **science, policy, and activism**. **Climate activists are also seen as leaders in the fight for environmental justice**. Individuals around the world are taking action to combat climate change and demand **systemic change**. As of **April 19, 2024, 12 climate activists**<sup>39</sup> have been recognized for their inspiring efforts in **raising awareness, pushing for policy change, and driving sustainable initiatives**. These activists have demonstrated that **individual actions—when combined with collective movements—can lead to real change**. Their work highlights the **power of grassroots activism** in shaping public discourse and influencing political decisions on climate policy. The role of activists is to educate the people also on the **root causes** of climate change in order to address its consequences effectively. The **primary drivers** of global warming include fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, industrial agriculture and livestock farming.<sup>40</sup>

These human activities, combined with **natural greenhouse gas emissions**, have **intensified the greenhouse effect**, leading to **rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and long-term ecological damage**. Therefore, the **fight against climate change requires a multi-faceted approach**, combining **policy advocacy, public activism, and sustainable practices**. Organizations like **CAN and climate activists worldwide** play an essential role in **holding governments accountable and pushing for meaningful environmental reforms**.

The Islamic Perspective: Is Climate Change a Moral or Political Crisis?

The Holy Qur'an provides profound guidance on **human responsibility for protecting the environment**, framing climate issues as both a **moral obligation** and a **political duty**. This section explores Qur'anic perspectives on environmental stewardship, the consequences of environmental degradation, and the roles of individuals and leaders in addressing the climate crisis. The Qur'an contains several verses that emphasize humanity's duty to **preserve nature** and **respect Allah's creation**. These verses highlight the ethical framework that governs environmental stewardship in Islam.

**"O children of Adam! Dress in your best attire when going to the mosque. Eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess."** (Al-A'raf: 31)<sup>41</sup>

Through this verse the Qur'an encourages moderation, warning against overconsumption and resource depletion. It promotes **sustainable use of natural resources** to maintain environmental balance.

**"And when he turns away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption, destroying crops and livestock. But Allah does not like corruption."** (Al-Baqarah :205)<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Climate Network. (n.d.). *Global climate action and policy*. Retrieved from <https://climatenetwork.org/>

<sup>39</sup> International Rescue Committee. (n.d.). *12 climate activists making a difference*. Retrieved from <https://www.rescue.org/article/12-climate-activists>

<sup>40</sup> European Commission. (n.d.). *EU climate initiatives and policies*. Retrieved from [https://commission.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>41</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:31.

<sup>42</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:205.

This verse suggests that the Qur'an condemns acts that harm the environment, such as **deforestation, pollution, and wastefulness**. It portrays environmental destruction as a **form of corruption** (*fasād*), which is strongly condemned in Islamic teachings.

**"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that Allah may let them taste a part of what they have done, that perhaps they will return (to righteousness)." (Surah Ar-Rum:41)** <sup>43</sup>

This verse directly links environmental crises to human misconduct. It serves as a **warning** that **destructive human actions lead to severe consequences**, urging people to correct their behavior before it is too late.

**"Eat and drink from the provisions of Allah, and do not cause corruption on the Earth, spreading mischief." (Surah Baqarah:60)** <sup>44</sup>

Here the Qur'an emphasizes that while humans are allowed to benefit from the earth's resources, they must do so **responsibly and sustainably**, ensuring the well-being of future generations.

**"Eat and drink, but do not be excessive; indeed, He does not like those who commit excess." (Qur'an Al-A'raf:31)** <sup>45</sup>

Lastly this verse reinforces the **principle of balance (mizān)** in consumption, discouraging wastefulness and over-exploitation of natural resources. **Overall**, these verses indicate that the environment is a **trust (amanah) from Allah**. Humanity is entrusted with its **care and preservation**, making environmental protection an **ethical and spiritual duty**. From mankind is required to **use resources wisely** and avoid waste; to **prevent destruction and corruption** on earth; to **maintain balance in consumption** and production and to **preserve the natural order** as a divine responsibility.

The **concept of stewardship (khilāfah)** in Islam holds that human beings are not the owners of the Earth but its **caretakers**, responsible for maintaining its integrity. **On the other hand**, by analyzing these verses, it becomes evident that the Qur'an primarily considers the **climate crisis as a moral issue** manifested by a **greed-driven exploitation** of natural resources, **excessive consumption and wastefulness and destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity**. These **moral failures** contribute to environmental destruction. The Qur'an urges people to recognize the **consequences of their actions** and act responsibly before irreversible damage occurs.

**"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that Allah may let them taste a part of what they have done, that perhaps they will return (to righteousness)." (Surah Al-Rum:41)**

This verse acts as a **divine warning**, urging humanity to **reflect on their environmental impact** and take responsibility for restoring balance to the Earth. While the Qur'an emphasizes **individual responsibility**, it also highlights the **role of leadership** in addressing societal and environmental challenges. Certain verses assign **political responsibility** to rulers, making environmental governance a **collective duty** that extends beyond individual actions.

**"And when your Lord said to the angels: 'I will appoint a vicegerent on Earth'..." (Surah Baqarah 30)** <sup>46</sup>

This verse establishes humankind as **Allah's vicegerent (khalifah) on Earth**, indicating a **duty of leadership** to maintain justice and harmony in society, including environmental protection. Islamic scholars, such as **Ibn Kathir, Imam Al-Qurtubi, and Al-Razi**, interpret this verse as evidence that leaders have a **responsibility to ensure justice** in environmental and social

<sup>43</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ar-Rum, 30:41.

<sup>44</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:60.

<sup>45</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-A'raf, 7:31.

<sup>46</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:30

matters. It also indicates that governance should be **rooted in sustainability and ethical decision-making**.<sup>47</sup>

Another scholar, Ibn Jarir said: "The meaning of this verse in this context is: 'I am appointing a vicegerent on Earth on My behalf, who will succeed Me in ruling with justice among My creation. And that vicegerent is Adam and those who succeed him in obedience to Allah and in ruling with justice among His creation.'"<sup>48</sup>

Muhammad ibn Ishaq interpreted Allah's statement: "I will appoint a vicegerent on Earth," as referring to a resident and a builder who will develop and inhabit the Earth.<sup>49</sup>

According to Al-Qurtubi: "This verse is a foundational proof for the obligation of appointing an imam (leader) or a vicegerent, who is to be obeyed, so that unity is maintained, and the rulings of the caliphate are implemented."<sup>50</sup>

**Political leaders are responsible for ensuring environmental policies that prevent destruction and uphold justice. Scholars refer to the example of Prophet Dawud (David) in Leadership.**

**"O Dawud, We have made you a vicegerent on Earth, so judge among the people with justice..."**

(Surah Sad:26)<sup>51</sup>

Prophet Dawud (David) is commanded to **govern with justice**, highlighting the **moral and political** responsibility of leaders to ensure **fairness, equity, and sustainability** in their rulings. Then **why political systems must address climate change?** According to Al-Razi and other scholars, **governance is essential** because **humans are interdependent**, requiring shared resources and responsibilities. Furthermore, **disputes arise** over resource distribution, requiring leadership for **fair resolution**. And lastly **rulers must enforce laws** that prevent environmental exploitation and degradation. Without strong **political will and governance**, societies risk **conflict, environmental destruction, and economic instability**.<sup>52</sup>

From these arguments we may conclude that the **climate crisis is both a moral and a political issue** according to the Qur'an. **As a moral issue**, individuals are warned against overconsumption and wastefulness, greedy exploitation of nature and destruction of ecosystems. **As a political issue**, leaders are responsible for enforcing environmental laws, ensuring sustainable policies and governing with justice to protect resources.

Therefore, Islamic teachings emphasize that **addressing climate change requires both ethical responsibility and strong governance**. By fulfilling these duties, **individuals and leaders** can work together to **protect the Earth for future generations**. The **Holy Qur'an** establishes a clear link between **governance, leadership, and environmental responsibility**. Climate change, as a global crisis, is not merely a **scientific or economic issue**—it is also a **moral and political concern** that requires **just leadership, sustainable policies, and responsible governance**. According to the **Qur'an**, rulers and leaders bear a **profound duty to uphold justice and ensure the well-being of their people**. This responsibility extends to **environmental stewardship**, as neglecting the environment leads to **social, economic, and ecological crises** that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable.

**"Indeed, Allah commands justice, good conduct, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, bad conduct, and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed."**  
(Surah An-Nahl 16:90)

<sup>47</sup> Kurtubi, M. A. (1991). *Elxhamiu Liahkamil Kuran* (Vol. 1, p. 271). Beirut: Darul Kutub el-Ilmije, and Ibn Kethir, E. F. I. (1983). *Tefsirul Kuranil Adhim* (Vol. 1, p. 218). Beirut: Darul Mearifeti.

<sup>48</sup> Taberi, M. I. J. (n.d.). *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an* (Vol. 1, p. 449).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Kurtubi, M. A. (1991). *Elxhamiu Liahkamil Kuran* (Vol. 1, p. 271). Beirut: Darul Kutub el-Ilmije

<sup>51</sup> **Qur'an, Surah Sad, 38:26.**

<sup>52</sup> Razi, M. O. (n.d.). *Mefatihul Gajb* (3rd ed., Vol. 26, p. 386). Beirut: Dar Ihja et-Turath el-Arabij.

This verse highlights **justice in governance**, which extends to **environmental justice**. Rulers must ensure **policies that prevent harm to nature and society**, reinforcing the ethical principle that leaders are accountable for the consequences of their decisions. In the **context of climate change**, this means that **leaders must implement policies** that: **protect the environment** from harmful industrial practices, **regulate economic activities** to prevent long-term ecological damage, **ensure that policies promote sustainability** rather than exploitation. Failing to take action on climate change **constitutes an injustice** (zulm) that **endangers both people and ecosystems**. Furthermore, the Qur'an consistently emphasizes **justice**, not just in social or economic matters, but also in the **distribution and preservation of natural resources**.

**"We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Scripture and the Balance so that people may uphold justice."** (Al-Hadid 57:25)

The concept of **balance (mīzān)** is central to Islamic teachings, symbolizing the **harmonious order** in creation. Justice includes **environmental justice**, where **every human being has the right to a clean and healthy environment**. On this topic, the renowned Islamic scholar **Yusuf Al-Qaradawi**, in his writings on **Islamic environmental ethics**, presents a **comprehensive Islamic vision** for protecting nature. He states:

"It is essential to have legislation and punitive measures for those who destroy the environment. However, laws alone will not solve the problem at its root unless the inner condition of human beings is also improved."<sup>53</sup>

Islamic teachings support the idea that **legal frameworks** are necessary to **punish those who exploit or destroy nature and to regulate industries and corporations** to ensure sustainability. However, as Al-Qaradawi highlights, **laws alone are insufficient**.

## CONCLUSION

The climate crisis is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, requiring urgent intervention at both **moral** and **political** levels. This paper has explored the **Qur'anic perspective** on environmental stewardship, the **political dimensions of climate action**, and the **moral responsibility** that individuals and leaders share in protecting the Earth.

The **Holy Qur'an** provides a **comprehensive framework** for environmental ethics, emphasizing **balance (mīzān)**, **sustainability**, and **justice**. It warns against **wastefulness, corruption, and excessive consumption**, urging humanity to recognize the Earth as an **Amanah (trust)** that must be preserved for future generations. The Qur'an's **moral guidance** calls on individuals to act responsibly, while its **political teachings** place the burden of governance on rulers, who must implement policies that protect natural resources and ensure equitable distribution. Despite increasing awareness of the environmental crisis, global efforts to combat climate change have remained insufficient. Scientific research, international agreements, and grassroots activism continue to emphasize the need for urgent action, yet **political inaction, economic greed, and institutional failures** have slowed progress. As this paper has demonstrated, **climate change is not merely a scientific issue—it is a moral dilemma, a political struggle, and a test of global leadership**. The research presented here underscores that climate change is both a **moral and political crisis**. **As a moral issue**, individuals are warned against overconsumption and wastefulness, greedy exploitation of nature and destruction of ecosystems. **As a political issue**, leaders are responsible for enforcing environmental laws, ensuring sustainable policies and governing with justice to protect resources. **Islamic teachings provide a holistic approach** to climate governance, emphasizing that **solutions require a balance of ethics and law, personal accountability, and strong leadership**. The Qur'an reminds us that corruption on land and sea is a **direct result of human actions** and warns that **continued neglect will lead to irreversible consequences**.

While leaders must take decisive steps toward **environmental protection, sustainable economic policies, and climate justice**, **individuals and communities** also play a crucial role. Organizations like **the Climate Action Network (CAN)** and **climate activists worldwide** have

<sup>53</sup> Qardawi, J. (2001). *Riajetel Bij'eti fi sherial Islamiye* (p. 257). Cairo: Daru Shuruk.

shown that **collective action** can push for meaningful reforms and hold governments accountable. Religious scholars, such as **Yusuf Al-Qaradawi**, emphasize that **laws alone are not enough**—there must be an **internal transformation in human behavior** to truly address the crisis. This reinforces the need for **public awareness, ethical decision-making, and a shift in societal values** toward sustainability.

The **climate crisis is not insurmountable**—but addressing it requires **bold action, moral integrity, and strong governance**. The **Qur’anic vision** of environmental justice provides a powerful foundation for this effort, urging humanity to **restore balance to the Earth before it is too late**. By embracing **Qur’anic principles**, scientific knowledge, and collective activism, we can work toward a **sustainable future that reflects divine wisdom, protects the planet, and safeguards humanity for generations to come**.

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