Articles

Unlocking the Potential of Al Mizan for Humanitarian Action

Dr. Amjad Mohamed-Saleem

Adjunct Senior Fellow, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, Sunway University, Kuala Lumpur

Research Fellow, Universiti Malaya

Non-Resident Fellow, Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, Doha

Abstract

In humanitarianism, various frameworks and ideologies guide actions to alleviate human suffering and promote justice. Among these, the Islamic perspective, deeply rooted in Quranic teachings and Prophetic traditions, offers a unique approach. This paper explores the significance of Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth as a possible framework for Muslim humanitarianism working on climate change. The covenant underpins the idea of balance and Justice within Islam and its connection to nature. This paper argues that this can help in shaping Muslim humanitarian efforts. By examining the intersections of Al-Mizan, Islam, and nature, the paper uncovers these intersections' richness and practical utility in fostering compassionate and sustainable humanitarian actions among Muslims to address climate change.

Introduction

There is an increasing realization that with humanity being at the crossroads of environmental poly-crises, there is a need for a collective effort to protect every living system on Earth (Steffen et al., 2007). In this sense, religious traditions emphasize this strict responsibility to address this crisis (Thiel, 2022), allowing for the affirmation of life's dynamic, interrelated dimensions, revaluing nature as a source of life, and renewing thinking. Thus, faith and spirituality can carry the unique hope of this responsibility to protect the planet.

Sherma (2022) explains this link between religion and environmental protection as "green spirituality," an orientation to the Divine or supreme reality grounded in our life experience on planet Earth, respecting the miracle of life on this planet. It recognizes our relationship with harnessing the world's spiritual traditions to energize the effort to restore planetary ecosystems and stop future harm. It also speaks to the lived experience of millions of people for whom religion and/or spirituality are vital and for whom it matters (Mohamed Saleem, 2023). Thus, new ways of thinking about addressing the environmental poly-crises need to tap into the values that are embedded in religion, philosophy, spiritual ethics, moral traditions, and a culture that values the community and the commons—as an essential resource for the transformation

necessary for environmental regeneration and renewal and that treat the Earth as sacrosanct (Sherma, 2022). Hence, it is against a framework of potential disagreement and division, as much as cooperation and collaboration of faiths, that an engagement process must occur with faith-based organizations and other faith actors. There is a need to revalue nature as a source of life, not a resource for exploitation, and this starts as a basis of prevention (Tucker, 2022).

In this guise, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's encyclical, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and environmental well-being, urging a holistic approach to planetary health, can be considered. It advocates for sustainable development and environmental stewardship, highlighting how ecological degradation directly impacts the health and dignity of people experiencing poverty. The encyclical's call for an "integral ecology" frames environmental care as a moral imperative. In so doing, *Laudato Si'* encourages collective action to protect both people and the planet, reinforcing that safeguarding our environment is crucial for human health and survival.

While Christian eco-theology focuses on stewardship and the ethics of Earth justice, there still needs to be more contemporary formalized work from an Islamic perspective around the Earth. Except for some early work done by early Islamic scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, who discussed the relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing stewardship and the ethical use of resources (Foltz, 2003), or contemporary scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who has advocated for an Islamic environmental ethic, arguing for the spiritual and ethical dimensions of ecological conservation (Nasr, 1968), there are minimal resources. Thus, the recent release of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* is seen as a welcome counterpart to the Vatican document released nine years previously, giving a Muslim perspective on how faith can inform and inspire action in the face of current global ecological challenges, fostering sustainable development and stewardship of the planet (Nzwili, 2024). Key partners supporting this covenant include the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), Uskudar University, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), ICESCO, Quranic Botanic Garden, Islamic Help, and the Bahu Trust. These organizations collaborated to integrate scientific and religious knowledge, promoting environmental ethics and sustainable practices within the global Muslim community.

This paper seeks to understand the usefulness of Al Mizan, along with the interconnectedness of Islam and nature, in shaping Muslim humanitarianism's action regarding climate change. Humanitarianism, at its core, embodies the ethos of compassion, Justice, and solidarity with the vulnerable and marginalized. It is about alleviating immediate suffering and involves a broader commitment to transforming social conditions that perpetuate poverty and injustice (Barnett, 2011).

Humanitarianism in Islam and Some Challenges

Humanitarianism is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and principles, emphasizing compassion, charity, and social justice, aiming to alleviate

suffering, promote justice, and uphold human dignity (Mohamed Saleem, 2020). It is a crucial aspect of the theological, intellectual, and cultural heritage of Muslim societies underpinned by the concept of charity, which is central to social justice in Islam and a central tenet of the faith. Drawing from Qur'anic injunctions and the Prophetic model, Muslim humanitarian organizations engage in various activities, including emergency relief, healthcare provision, education, and sustainable development initiatives. Thus, acts of charity within the Islamic perspective are more than just good deeds; they are essential for balancing social inequalities. The Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of creating a just society. It provides a framework for justice in interpersonal relationships toward those who live in poverty or are affected by crisis and connections between communities and nations. The verse from the Qur'an best exemplifies this is "If anyone saved a life it would be as if he had saved the life of the whole of mankind…" (5:32). It is these types of teachings that have inspired acts of charity, concern for others, and the provision of social welfare to be an integral role in Muslim societies for the last 1,400 years as without them, faith is incomplete (Singer, 2008). There is also a four-point charter in the Qur'an to define the minimum rights of humankind through the provision of food, clothing, water, and shelter (Qur'an 20:119), which gives a framework for how humanitarian response is from an Islamic perspective.

Consequently, Muslim NGOs and other Islamic charitable institutions are instruments of social Justice (Bremmer, 2004) and part of the Muslim society's theological, intellectual, and cultural heritage. This humanitarian ethos transcends national and ethnic boundaries, reflecting global solidarity to improve the well-being of all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable. These are all intended to empower communities and address their needs sufficiently to lift them out of poverty and to address injustice. Through these efforts, Muslim humanitarianism addresses immediate needs and strives to create long-term, systemic change in line with the principles of justice and compassion central to the faith.

Charitable/social financing supports humanitarian work primarily through two categories: voluntary (sadaqah) and obligatory (zakat), although there are other tools such as waqf (endowments). The Muslim world possesses ample funds for charitable causes, although this has yet to be fully quantified. Some existing evidence estimates that annually, between US$200 billion and $1 trillion are spent on "mandatory" alms and voluntary charities across the Muslim world (Pickup & Beik, 2018). However, the challenge lies not in the amount collected or the data for collection but in how these funds are utilized. If all potential zakat were collected in Muslim countries, a significant portion of their impoverished populations could be lifted out of poverty. The increasing religiosity and wealth in the Muslim world underscores the potential for Islamic social financing to address climate change (Mohamed Saleem, 2015).

Despite the potential of Islamic social financing, there needs to be more understanding and spirit regarding zakat. Consequently, communities are rarely empowered, and many possibilities must be funded. Some operational challenges with Islamic social finance could hinder its use in dealing with

humanitarian crises, especially in addressing climate change. There is a lack of a global platform among Muslim donors for providing aid for international crises. Most Muslim aid efforts are domestically focused and lack accounting and transparency (Mahmood & Mohamed Saleem, 2023).

The notion of balance permeates Muslim humanitarianism, guiding approaches that prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable while striving for equitable resource distribution. In conflict zones and disaster areas, Muslim humanitarian actors navigate complex dynamics, upholding neutrality, impartiality, and the sanctity of human life. In Islam, these principles are intrinsic to the faith, drawing inspiration from the Qur'an, the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), and scholarly interpretations.

Climate change poses significant challenges to humanitarian action, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones, complicating efforts to provide timely and practical assistance. Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts, lead to widespread displacement, food insecurity, and health crises. Humanitarian organizations must adapt to these threats by increasingly focusing on climate resilience and adaptation strategies, securing flexible funding, and enhancing coordination with local communities to build adaptive capacities to mitigate these impacts. It means that Muslim humanitarianism needs to start integrating climate considerations into humanitarian planning and response, which is crucial to ensure that aid efforts address immediate needs and contribute to long-term sustainability and disaster risk reduction. The intersection of climate change and humanitarian action underscores the urgent need for a coordinated, global response to protect vulnerable populations and promote resilience in a rapidly changing environment. In this context, Al Mizan provides an exciting framework for humanitarian action addressing climate change and planetary health.

Al Mizan: The Concept of Balance in Islam

Al Mizan, derived from the Arabic root word "wazn," connotes balance, equity, fairness, harmony, equilibrium, and justice. It is a fundamental principle in Islamic ethics and jurisprudence, encompassing a holistic understanding of equilibrium in individual conduct, societal relations, and environmental stewardship. The Quran emphasizes Al Mizan in numerous verses, urging believers to uphold Justice and maintain equilibrium: "Thus, have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves..." (Quran 2:143). This verse highlights the pivotal role of balance and justice in the mission of the Muslim community (Ummah) and the exemplary conduct of Prophet Muhammad.

The release of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* marks a significant milestone in Islamic scholarship and religious discourse for humanitarianism as well as for environmental change (Llewellyn et al., 2024). It speaks to providing an Islamic perspective to a re-enchantment of our vision of the natural world, with rights of its own (Murad, 2022)

The publication of *Al-Mizan* represents a monumental comprehensive scholarly endeavor characterized by meticulous research, linguistic analysis, and theological insight. It is a comprehensive exploration of the Qur'anic text, rooted in classical Islamic sources and philosophical discourse, to enrich the understanding of Qur'anic themes and principles to tackle climate change. It provides a Qur'anic worldview and Islamic theology to develop ethical principles and spiritual guidance for addressing climate change. It articulates a covenant that encourages signatories to commit to promoting sustainability and the protection of the planet and a framework for Islamic humanitarianism. Some of the critical themes from *Al-Mizan* include:

- Environmental Stewardship: Islamic teachings emphasize humanity's role as stewards (khalifa) of the Earth, entrusted with its preservation and well-being. Thus, environmental stewardship is underscored, calling on individuals and communities to safeguard the planet's ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources. It underscores the importance of humanitarian action addressing climate change as a moral imperative driven by the obligation to protect God's creation for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Interconnectedness of Creation: Islamic theology emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation, recognizing the intricate balance and harmony within the natural world. Climate change disrupts this balance, posing existential threats to ecosystems, biodiversity, and human well-being. Islamic humanitarianism encourages holistic approaches to environmental stewardship, emphasizing the interdependent relationship between humans, animals, plants, and the environment. This is emphasized as part of the core principles of Al Mizan.
- Ethical Responsibility: The covenant emphasizes the ethical dimensions of human conduct and societal relations, rooted in principles of justice, compassion, and accountability. It highlights humanity's ethical responsibility towards the Earth and its inhabitants, urging equitable resource distribution, protection of vulnerable populations, and respect for the intrinsic value of all life forms.
- Ethical Consumption and Lifestyle: There is an emphasis on promoting ethical consumption patterns and lifestyles, prioritizing moderation, simplicity, and sustainability. Climate change is linked to consumption patterns, including energy use, food production, and waste generation. Islamic humanitarianism encourages mindful consumption habits that minimize environmental impact and promote the responsible use of resources.
- Ethical Framework for Action: This emphasizes an ethical framework rooted in Islamic principles for guiding humanitarian action. By emphasizing concepts such as balance, justice, and stewardship, the covenant offers a moral compass for Muslim humanitarian organizations to navigate complex socio-environmental challenges and make ethical decisions in their interventions.

- Social Justice: The inseparable link between environmental justice and social justice is emphasized, highlighting the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalized communities. As climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities, including the poor, marginalized, and displaced, Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of addressing these social injustices and advocating for equitable access to resources, adaptation measures, and disaster relief efforts.
- Universal Participation: Governments, corporations, organizations, and individuals worldwide call for participation, recognizing that addressing global environmental challenges requires collective action and that it is a collective responsibility to address pressing environmental challenges.
- Integration of Environmental Concerns: There is an emphasis on the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainability within Islamic teachings. This integration of environmental concerns into Islamic humanitarianism expands the scope of humanitarian efforts to include environmental justice, conservation, and climate resilience alongside traditional humanitarian activities such as disaster relief, healthcare, and poverty alleviation.
- Interconnectedness of Humanitarian and Environmental Issues: This emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanitarian and environmental issues, highlighting how environmental degradation exacerbates humanitarian crises and vice versa. This holistic understanding encourages Muslim humanitarian organizations to adopt integrated approaches that simultaneously address environmental and humanitarian concerns, leading to more effective and sustainable interventions.

Overall, *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* aims to provide a framework for global cooperation and action on environmental issues, guided by sustainability, justice, and responsibility principles. It represents a seminal initiative in the quest for global sustainability, encapsulating defining features that embody its vision, principles, and operational modalities. Through concerted action and unwavering commitment, it aspires to engender a harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world, safeguarding the planet for future generations. A framework for Muslim humanitarianism to address climate change can be developed from the key tenets of Al Mizan.

Critical Framework for Muslim Humanitarianism and Addressing Climate Change

Nature is crucial in shaping traditional Muslim humanitarian activities, offering opportunities and challenges for sustainable development and resilience-building. Traditional Islamic practices, such as water conservation (istisqa') and biodiversity preservation (hima), align with contemporary efforts to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation. Moreover, the interconnectedness between environmental health and human well-being

underscores the importance of holistic approaches to humanitarian action. Muslim humanitarian organizations can contribute to long-term poverty alleviation and community empowerment by promoting ecological sustainability and ecosystem resilience. From *Al-Mizan*, this paper has identified various components (values, principles, and practices) to be used as a basis for addressing climate change, which will also contribute to peace in human life. Adopting, implementing, and living by these values and principles is necessary to fulfil the Islamic faith. All these values and principles are rooted in the Qur'an and put into practice (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013)

Pluralism, Diversity, and Human Solidarity through the Principle of Tawhid (the Oneness of God)

The Islamic tradition, particularly the Qur'anic narrative, explicitly states that the existence of diversity (e.g., different religions and nations) is by God's design and should be celebrated. The Qur'an, for instance, states: "

> To thee We sent the Scripture in Truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so, judge between them by what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the Truth of the matters in which ye dispute. (Q 5:48)

Additionally, the Qur'an states: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you" (Q 49:13). Thus, Islamic texts call for solidarity and collaborative action. Social solidarity in Islam is reflected in the idea of brotherhood, particularly in the concept of the ummah (nation/community), as highlighted in the Hadith: "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body; when one of the limbs is afflicted, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever."

However, solidarity and collaborative action extend beyond interactions with fellow Muslims. Islam teaches that the source of creation is one, making all humanity a single family descending from a single mother and father (i.e., Adam and Eve). Therefore, all human beings are brothers and sisters in humanity. This has implications, by extension, for the rest of creation as well. The Islamic ideals of diversity, pluralism, and brotherhood are rooted in the Qur'anic principles of Tawhid (the unity of God) and Wihdat al Wujud (the unity of all beings). Nasr (2003) notes that "Tawhid has two meanings: 'the state of unity or oneness' and 'the act of making one or integration'" (p. 31). While the state of unity, oneness, and uniqueness belongs to God only, God's creation participates in multiplicity. Therefore, to exist in the world is to live in diversity. Tawhid's second meaning signifies integration, connectedness, and unity at the diversity and multiplicity level. Human interdependency and

interconnectedness are thus central to this Islamic value and principle. Throughout Islamic history, the notion of Tawhid has encouraged Muslims to integrate both the individual and society without destroying cultural and ethnic differences. Tawhid reminds Muslims of the connectedness of all beings, particularly human communities, and calls on Muslims to work toward establishing peace and harmony among them. The Islamic notion of Tawhid extends to all of God's creation, including animals and plants, as "human disobedience results in consequences for the whole of creation" (Chittick, 1990, p 152).

Universality, Dignity and Sacredness of Humanity Through the Principle of Fitrah (the Original Nature of Human Beings)

Each human being has dignity, and human life is valuable and must be protected. Islamic traditions affirm the sacredness of human life and recognize the worth and dignity of each human being. For instance, the Qur'an states, "And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Q 5:32). According to Islamic traditions, every human being is created by the form and image of God (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013) and the human spirit is of divine origin. This perspective holds that every human being is created "innocent, pure, true and free, inclined to right and virtue and endued with true understanding about… his [or her] true nature…" (Said et al., 2001, S. 279).

Thus, the idea of Fitrah rejects notions of innate sinfulness and recognizes that all humans are related and derive from the exact pure origin as the Qur'an says: "O mankind! Revere your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women—fear Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you" (Q 4:1). This principle recognizes the goodness that is inherent in each human being at birth, regardless of different religious, ethnic, racial, or gender backgrounds (Q 17:70, 95:4, 2:30–34, 33:72). The Fitrah does not judge the wrong or right of human faith but instead evaluates the moral righteousness of the actions and thus has the capacity to relate and integrate individual responsibility with spiritual and moral awareness (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013). The Fitrah, moreover, recognizes that everyone, irrespective of gender, is furnished with reason and has the potential to be good and to choose to work to establish harmony. Thus, reason must be honored since reason is the mechanism by which moral choices of right and wrong are made. According to the Qur'anic tradition, this faculty enables human beings to accept the "trust" of freedom of will, which no other creature is willing to accept (Q 33:72).

Social Empowerment by Doing Good (Khayr and Ihsan) Through the Principle of Khilafah (Stewardship)

The concept of stewardship requires the involvement and social empowerment of community members to take action to tackle climate change.

"Social empowerment and involvement through Ihsan and khayr are also important paths to justice and peace in the Islamic tradition" (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013). It is the responsibility of human beings to do good and strive to ward off evil. The Qur'an recognizes the capacity of human beings to do good in the face of adversity and evil and to change their conditions as it is stated in the Qur'an "Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" (Q 13:11). This therefore empowers them to change their condition by doing good and shunning evil. The Qur'anic verse (9:71) also supports this, which urges Muslims to forbid evil and do good. The hadith "Whoever sees something evil should change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue; and if he cannot do even that, then in his heart. That is the weakest degree of faith"[1] also emphasizes the importance of social empowerment in doing good and forbidding evil.

Social empowerment and involvement to do good are closely tied to the Qur'anic principle of Khilafah (stewardship or vicegerency). According to Islamic theology, when God created human beings, He made them His vicegerents or representatives on Earth as the Qur'anic verse "God has promised to those among you who believe and do good that He will establish them as (His) vicegerents" (Q 24:55) clearly shows. Thus each individual as a representative of God on Earth (khilafat Allah fi l-Ard (Q 2:30, see also 33:72) is responsible for the order thereof and to contribute toward bringing all creatures under the sway of equilibrium and harmony and to live in peace with creation (Chittick, 1990). The Qu'ran "promotes social responsibility and positive bonds between people because of their common ethical responsibility towards one another" (Sachedina, 2000, p. 76). Nasr (2004) supports this view when he notes that in the Islamic tradition, "human community is judged according to the degree to which it allows its members to live a good life based on moral principles" (pp. 159–160).

Pursuit of Justice, Equality and Fairness Through the Principle of Adl (Justice)

Addressing climate change recognizes that justice (Adl) is central, and that is what Al Mizan is striving for. Justice is an integral aspect of the Islamic discourse of peace since the Qur'an clearly states that religion aims to bring justice: "We sent a foretime. Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice" (Q 57:25). The reason is that the collective community of Muslims is endowed by the Qur'an with moral standing, so long as it enjoins the good and forbids the evil. The commandment to act justly and to enforce justice is a collective obligation devolving on the community, not particular classes or divisions within the community. The justice that the Qur'an enjoins Muslims to uphold consists of universally applicable principles that emanate from a divine source and are invested in human beings by their humanity and

[1] *On the authority of Abu Sa'id (R.A)*

not by their affiliation to any particularistic human grouping, whether it be racial, ethnic, or "national" (Hashimi, 1993).

Muslims are asked to resist and correct the conditions of injustice, which are seen as a source of conflict and disorder on Earth (Q 27:52). Justice is the essential component of peace according to the Qur'anic message; therefore, it is the responsibility of all Muslims to work toward the establishment of justice for all, including social and economic justice (Q 4:135, 57:25, 5:8, 2:178, 2:30, 16:90). This notion of justice extends to both men and women, Muslim and non-Muslim, and cannot be achieved without an actively, socially engaged community. The Qur'an constantly reminds Muslims about the value of justice, which is a Divine command and not an option (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013). The Qur'anic notion of justice is universal and valid for all human beings, with the universality of justice being clearly expressed in the following Qur'anic verses: "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah even as against yourselves, your parents or your kin, and whether it be (against) the rich and poor …" (Q 4:135) and "… To fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just for it is Next to Piety …" (Q 5:8). The Prophet (PBUH) calls Muslims to mobilize and act against injustice, even if a Muslim originates the injustice. The universality of justice for all, not only for Muslims, is critical for the resolution of conflicts and developing peaceful relations as it calls on Muslims to be self-reflexive, self-critical, humble, and to accept responsibility for one's actions (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013)

Transformation of Relationships and Rehumanization Through the Principles of Rahman and Rahim (Compassion and Mercy)

The Qur'anic principles of Rahman (Compassion) and Rahim (Mercy) are two main tools that can facilitate this process. Every Muslim invokes Rahman and Rahim before they take any action when they recite "Bi-ism-i-Allah al-Rahman al-Rahim" ("We begin in the name of Allah Who is Compassionate and Merciful") as a reminder that actions must be dedicated to God, who is Himself merciful and compassionate. The centrality of compassion and mercy is evident in the Qur'an as almost all chapters start with this recitation, and God states, "My mercy extends to all things" (Q 7:156). Moreover, according to a famous Hadith Qudsi, God states: "Without doubt, My mercy precedes My wrath," one of Islamic thought's crucial principles. Mercifulness and compassion are vital qualities of the Prophets as well. The Qur'an refers to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as "Mercy to the World" (Q 21:107); thus, as the Messenger of God, he represents universal mercy. Besides pointing out that God is most forgiving, compassionate, and merciful, the Qur'an asks Muslims to be merciful and compassionate to all creatures: animals, plants, and humans (Q 17:18). As the Hadith "God is not merciful to him who is not so to mankind" indicates, especially those seeking God's mercy should be merciful themselves. Thus, a true Muslim must be merciful and compassionate to all human beings, irrespective of their ethnic, religious origins, or gender. The salience of these values, together with the principle of

the sacredness of life, rehumanizes the other by reminding Muslims that all human beings are sacred and must be protected. Therefore, a true Muslim cannot be insensitive to the suffering of other beings (physical, economic, psychological, or emotional), nor can one be cruel to any creature and torture, inflicting suffering or wilfully hurting another human being or another creature is unacceptable according to Islamic tradition.

Creative Solutions to Problems Through the Principle of Sabr (Patience)

Another critical value of addressing climate change is patience (sabr). Patience is the focus of about 200 verses of the Qur'an and is referred to indirectly in many others. It is one of the core subjects of the scriptures and is a virtue of believers, who are expected to endure enormous difficulties and maintain a strong belief in God (Kadayifci-Orellana et al., 2013). The Qu'ran urges Muslims to suspend judgment and be patient as the verse states, "And endure patiently whatever may befall thee" (Q 31:17). God asks believers to be steadfast and promises deliverance to those who endure these difficulties with patience: "And We made a people, considered weak (and of no account), inheritors of lands in both the east and the west, - lands whereon We sent down Our blessings. The fair promise of thy Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because they had patience and constancy, and We levelled to the ground the great works and fine buildings which Pharaoh and his people erected (with such pride)" (Q 7:137). In another verse, the Qur'an has all the Prophets speak: "And we shall surely bear with patience all the harm you do us" (Q 14:12–13). However, the Qur'an does not ask Muslims to remain passive in the face of oppression and injustice.

On the contrary, it asks Muslims to engage in active struggle (jihad) to establish peace and harmony. However, Muslims must not transgress in their struggle and must also be patient. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said during the Farewell Pilgrimage: "The fighter in the way of God is he who makes jihad against himself (jahada nafsah) for the sake of obeying God." Taming their tendency to transgress, these mujahidin (people who undertake jihad) exert energy to overcome the selfish promptings of their egos. For this reason, the Qur'an equates them with "the patient ones" (sabirin): "We shall put you on trial so that We know those among you who strive in the cause of God (mujahidin) and are the patient (sabirin)" (Q 47:31).

Patience (sabr), according to Khan (1988), makes a person capable of finding a positive and successful solution to a problem. He states that "patience is set above all other Islamic virtues with the exceptional promise of reward beyond measure" (Khan, 1988, p. 1). He further states that the entire spirit of the Qur'an aligns with the concept of patience. Patience, he states, implies a peaceful response or reaction, whereas impatience implies a violent response. He continues, adding that the word sabr expresses the notion of nonviolence as it is understood in modern times. As such, it is the opposite of violence. In this context, "jihad" refers to nonviolent activism, while "qital" is violent activism. To support this view, he invokes the Qur'anic verse "perform jihad with this (i.e. the word of the Qur'an) most strenuously" (Q 25:52). Since the Qur'an is

not a sword or a gun, but a book of ideology performing jihad, could only mean an ideological struggle to conquer people's hearts and minds through Islam's superior philosophy (Q 25:52). This quality and spirit need to be developed to address climate change.

Addressing Climate Change from an Islamic Perspective

Most literature on Islam, the environment, and climate change is theoretical. It focuses on Islamic environmental ethics, which explores the relationship between Islamic teachings and ecological issues, emphasizing principles like stewardship, the ethical use of resources, and the concept of humans as guardians of the Earth (Sayem, 2023). Thus, more practical engagement on climate change is needed.

Integral to the Islamic worldview is recognizing nature as a manifestation of divine wisdom and a trust (amanah) bestowed on humanity. The Quran frequently directs believers to contemplate the signs of creation to deepen their faith and understanding of God's omnipotence and benevolence: "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the Earth and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the Earth, (With the thought): 'Our Lord! Not for naught hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire'" (Quran 3:190–191).

Islam advocates for a balanced and sustainable relationship between humans and the natural world, emphasizing stewardship (Khilafah) rather than domination over creation. Prophet Muhammad, through his words and actions, exemplified reverence for nature and its inhabitants, encouraging conservation and prohibiting wanton destruction: "The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily God, be He exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves" (Muslim).

As the framework outlined by Al Mizan shows, the foundation of any response to climate change within Islam is the fundamental belief in ensuring social justice and equity in society, following the example set by the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him - PBUH). The sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) emphasize the preservation of equity, such as "None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself." Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the responsibility of humans towards ensuring equity and social Justice on Earth, as the Hadith says, "Each of you is a shepherd and all of you are responsible for your flocks." In the Quran, God commands believers to "make not mischief (fassad) on earth" (Quran 2:11). While "fassad" can be interpreted as spoiling the natural functioning of the world or degrading natural resources, it can also be seen as creating mischief between people, referring to human interactions. Islamic teachings command Muslims to avoid and prevent "fassad," which encompasses undue exploitation or degradation of environmental resources and the exploitation and oppression of fellow human beings. This emphasizes the duty of care for communities and their relationship with nature, promoting the equitable and balanced

distribution of resources. Islam emphasizes a spiritual awareness that the Creator has provided the means and resources for maintaining a balanced ecosystem (Mahmood & Mohamed Saleem, 2023).

Zakat funds, for instance, can be crucial in supporting education programs focused on climate change awareness, environmental conservation, and sustainability. These programs can include climate change awareness initiatives, environmental conservation projects, promotion of sustainable practices, support for green education institutions, development of educational materials, community workshops and training, and the greening of mosques and religious centres. While there may be fewer dedicated organizations solely focused on this aspect, by supporting existing environmental and faith-based initiatives, zakat can contribute effectively to raising awareness and educating communities about climate change within Islamic charity and social responsibility.

In addition, waqf, as an Islamic endowment system, can also be effectively employed to fund climate adaptation projects, particularly those aimed at building resilient infrastructure in vulnerable areas. For instance, a climate adaptation waqf can be established to fund climate resilience initiatives. These waqfs can be tailored to specific geographical regions vulnerable to climate change impacts. They can fund resilient infrastructure, engage local communities in decision-making, support climate-resilient agricultural practices, and promote sustainable energy generation through solarisation initiatives.

Other Islamic social financing mechanisms, including qard al-hasan (benevolent loans) and sadaqah (charity), represent altruistic ways of providing financial support to those in need. Qard al-hasan is an interest-free, benevolent loan provided to individuals facing financial hardships, while sadaqah encompasses any form of charitable giving motivated by empathy and compassion without the expectation of repayment. These mechanisms are deeply rooted in Islamic values of compassion, solidarity, and social justice and can play a vital role in enhancing food security and addressing climate change-induced challenges. While the potential for expanding Islamic finance institutions' frameworks to include climate and environmental issues is considerable, most institutions are only in the early stages of assessing how climate change may impact their businesses and how they might manage those impacts. Therefore, it is crucial for Islamic financial institutions to maintain a clear perspective, enabling them to effectively navigate the increasing risks while harnessing the myriad opportunities that climate-related finance offers (UNEPFI et al., 2023)

Islamic humanitarianism offers a comprehensive framework for addressing climate change rooted in religious principles, ethical values, and practical action. By integrating environmental stewardship, social justice, compassion, and advocacy, Islamic organizations and communities contribute to global efforts to mitigate climate change and build a more sustainable and equitable world for present and future generations. This is where Al Mizan can play a role.

It is also important to note that there is no uniform interpretation of climate change among Muslims. Based on their interpretations of Islam, Muslims have generated different approaches to climate change (Koehrsen, 2021). This entails distinguishing between "Islam" as an abstract religious knowledge system and "Muslims" as individual and collective actors (e.g., organizations) who identify with Islam. These actors may interpret the religious knowledge system in various ways. As this review indicates, there is no uniform interpretation of climate change among Muslims. Based on their interpretations of Islam, Muslims have developed diverse approaches to addressing climate change. This could reach broad populations in Muslim-majority countries through public messages, Friday prayers, and ethical teachings or using the infrastructures and financial resources to undertake practical environmental projects (e.g., recycling or avoiding food wastage) that become experimentation sites for local communities or materializing change by undertaking socioecological measures to reduce carbon emissions (e.g., switching energy consumption of religious buildings to renewables) and disseminating pro-environmental values and worldviews to their religious constituencies and thereby potentially influencing their lifestyles (e.g., through religious school teachings and messages during religious services or having low-carbon eco-mosques or the reduction of food waste during Ramadan). Activities like these illustrate how Muslim activists reframe traditional Islamic practices by combining them with environmental goals to foster low-carbon transitions.

Conclusion

While there are some clear examples, Islamic environmentalism remains a minority phenomenon among Muslims. However, introducing *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* within Islamic humanitarianism marks a significant shift toward a more holistic, ethically grounded, and environmentally conscious approach to humanitarian action. By embracing principles of balance, justice, and stewardship, Muslim humanitarian organizations can play a vital role in advancing environmental sustainability, promoting social justice, and fostering resilient communities in the face of environmental challenges. This initiative has the potential to transform Islamic humanitarianism by integrating environmental concerns into its work, providing an ethical framework for action, recognizing the interconnectedness of humanitarian and environmental issues, promoting capacity building and advocacy, fostering collaboration and partnerships, and empowering local communities to address environmental challenges effectively.

Innovative financing to address climate change is essential as it brings in additional capital and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of climate initiatives. Islamic social financing mechanisms, emphasizing selfless giving and charitable acts rooted in Islamic values of compassion, solidarity, and social justice, can be a powerful resource for supporting education and awareness programs related to climate change, environmental conservation, and sustainability. To fully harness the potential of Islamic social finance in addressing climate change, we need to understand and evaluate its empowering

concepts and develop new models for implementation that align with current challenges. Islamic social financing, rooted in redistributive justice, can be crucial in building climate-resilient and environmentally conscious communities. As awareness and interest in sustainable initiatives grow, more work is needed to build evidence of the role of Islamic social finance in contributing to climate resilience and sustainable energy practices. The relationship between Islamic humanitarianism and climate change is grounded in religious principles, ethical values, and practical considerations. By embracing stewardship, social justice, and compassion, Islamic humanitarianism contributes to global efforts to address climate change and build a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

The introduction of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* within Islamic humanitarianism can significantly shape discourse and guide practical actions within Muslim humanitarian organizations. The intersections of *Al-Mizan*, Islam, and nature are profound, influencing the theory and practice of Muslim humanitarianism. Muslim humanitarian actors build resilient, equitable, and sustainable societies by upholding values of balance, compassion, and environmental stewardship. Integrating Islamic ethics and ecological wisdom holds promise for addressing complex humanitarian crises and advancing the common good.

In conclusion, the principles of *Al-Mizan*, Islam, and nature intersect profoundly, shaping the theory and practice of Muslim humanitarianism. Muslim humanitarian actors build more resilient, equitable, and sustainable societies by upholding values of balance, compassion, and environmental stewardship. As climate change, conflict, and poverty persist, integrating Islamic ethics and ecological wisdom holds immense promise for addressing complex humanitarian crises and advancing the common good.

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