

Islam and Climate Change

~ A Call To Heal

Produced by the
Wisdom In Nature team



Contributors:
Muzammal Hussain
Shumaisa Khan
Wasi Daniju
Zaibun Nisa

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*This booklet is dedicated to all contemplative
activists the world over: past, present and future..*

First produced in 2010



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Page 10: Climate March, Organised by Campaign against Climate Change: Photo Credit: Wisdom In Nature; Strength in Diversity 'Hands' Photo: Photo Credit: Wisdom In Nature.

We would like to express our thanks to Dr Ahmed Moustafa, Dora-Marie Goulet, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Jonathan Essex for their kind permission to use their work in this booklet.

We would also like to express our thanks to Nevine Nasser and Paul Jonas for lending us their valuable design skills, helping us to get over the difficult bits, and without whom the booklet could not have been completed.

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Introduction

One of the aims of this concise booklet is to present a clear understanding of climate change from an Islamic perspective. It is meant for anyone who is interested in what Islam has to say about climate change, and includes pictures and graphics in order to be more widely accessible.

Simultaneously, at a time in which presenting oneself as 'green' is becoming the norm, the authors recognise the attractions of superficial green solutions, to a challenge that demands much more from us. Thus, Islamic principles that touch on the necessity of a deeper approach, challenging though it may be, are included within the text in the light of our present day context.

In terms of solutions, rather than including a list of suggestions, the booklet gravitates towards weaving ideas around principles, including those centering on human relationships, and we pray that this thus presents a more holistic and empowering message to its readers.

The booklet was put together by a group that has had extensive experience working on Islamic eco-theology in the context of grassroots community activism, and who are passionate about the work that they do. We sincerely hope you gain much benefit from it, and most importantly that it inspires you to take action that is both holistic and enjoyable! If you would like more copies of the booklet, please visit our website: www.wisdominnature.org.uk



*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
- I took the road less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference"*

Robert Frost

We stand in a moment of human history when the world we see around us is about to change dramatically. The world, as we know it right now, is very different from the one we will see in thirty years time; and the world then, is going to be very different from the one many of us want to imagine.



These changes will take place because our species has over-dependend on fossil fuels for energy. We have now realised that we have used too much oil, coal and gas, in too short a space of time.

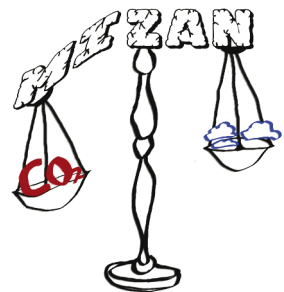


DISTURBANCE OF THE NATURAL ORDER...

Whilst this has provided us with many things that we may consider to be good or useful - such as the opportunity to be transported in our cars across and between cities; electricity to power our dishwashers, our televisions, and our computers; and products we can buy that needed energy for their production and transport - the burning of these fossil fuels has, nonetheless, released billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.



This increasing proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has disturbed the *mizan*, or balance that has been established.



The effects of this disturbance in the natural order are not likely to be pleasant. Indeed, the process, if allowed to continue, will lead to effects that will be catastrophic.

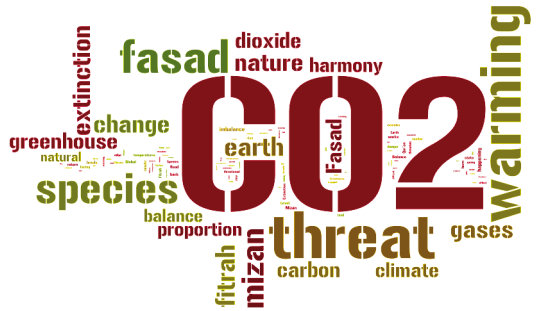
We are told:

“Verily, all things have we created in proportion and measure”

(Qur'an 54:49)



The increase in the ‘proportion’, or measure, of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, is causing the earth to heat up. From pre-industrial proportions of 280 ppm (parts per million), carbon dioxide levels have reached approximately 390ppm. The result is global warming and climatic change. These changes not only threaten other species, but they also threaten our own.



...A CALL TO THE *FITRAH*

One of the timeless truths of the ages is that if we violate God’s natural laws, we run the risk of *fasad* or disasters coming back at us, reminding us to return to our natural state - to the state of *fitrah* in which we were created and through which we are able to live in harmony with the wider creation

The *Qur'an* expresses this concept when it says:



“Disasters have spread throughout the land and sea, because of what the people have committed.

He thus lets them taste the consequences of some of their works, that they may return (to the right works)”

(Qur'an 30:41)

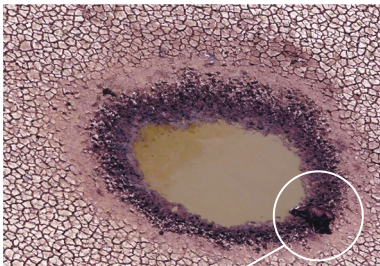
We know that the power of nature is immense. Because of global warming, severe hurricanes, already seemingly on the increase, may become even more common causing far greater destruction to life.



UNNATURAL DISASTERS

The higher temperatures have already caused glaciers to melt into oceans. Coupled with the thermal expansion of water, sea-levels are rising. Vast areas of land could soon disappear under the waves, including many parts of the Muslim world.

Bangladesh, for instance, already frequently affected by cyclones and flooding, could permanently lose more than twenty percent of its land mass this century, displacing tens of millions of people from their homes. A significant portion of Egypt and Vietnam could similarly be affected, as well as parts of the UK including areas within London.



As some parts of the world disappear under the waves, simultaneously the higher temperatures will cause others to become much drier leading to drought, crop failures, mass famine and conflict over the earth's diminishing resources.



Many people will be unable to survive, and others will be forced to migrate. The number of environmental refugees could reach hundreds of millions.



Climate change is becoming widely recognised as the greatest threat we face as a global community. In Islam, is a powerful and timely message. If we listen to it, we will become aware of the consistency with which it teaches us to revere nature, and to be sensitive to God’s works in the form of animals, insects, the soil and its organisms, the clouds, the sun and the moon. It teaches us to live in harmony with this natural order, to take only what we need, and not to waste.



“But waste not by excess
for God loveth not the wasters”

(Qur’an 6:141)



ISLAM: A RELIGION OF HARMONY

In this age of fictitious money and economic growth in a system based on usury, many Muslims too, have been successfully programmed to function as robotic consumers.



The situation we face is urgent.



Thus, the application of the message must take place now, in our generation, in our lives and in each of our communities and homes.

“It is He who has appointed you guardians in the earth”

(Qur’an 6:165)

So, the question we are left with is, ‘how do we fulfil this role as guardians, as *khalifah*, of this fragile, yet beautiful planet we inhabit?’

To avert catastrophic climate change, we must reduce our dependence on oil, coal and gas for our energy needs. There are natural forces we can harness. We can capture energy from the wind, the sun and from the movement of water. For many of us, we can now buy such 'green' electricity for our homes and businesses.



Simultaneously, as well as replacing one form of energy with another, it is essential that we also cut down total energy use, thus making it easier for renewables to meet our collective need. We can do this by insulating our homes, switching our appliances off when they are not in use, or by choosing energy saving products, for example.



In being more conscious of our food systems, as well as growing some of our own produce, we also have the choice of alternative food networks that are becoming increasingly available.

Difficult though it may seem, we must also become less dependent on our cars. We can walk or cycle instead. These activities, by providing exercise can also improve our physical and emotional health. We can also use public transport where this is available



Getting away for a break can enhance our wellbeing. We can simultaneously be mindful of the wellbeing of our world family, including other species, by committing to flying less whilst taking holidays more locally.

A return flight from London to Dubai for one person, has almost the same warming effect as one year's motoring in an average UK car.

At a human level we have an opportunity to re-connect with place - with our locality - and re-discover a sense of community that might have been lost with the surge of individualism. Local currencies, community food projects, and skills-sharing offer fulfilling and creative ways of meeting our needs, reducing carbon emissions and strengthening local communities.

FULFILLING OUR ROLE OF KHALIFAH



We can further enrich community through sharing our stories with others, developing our ability to listen, and by reflecting together on the lives of sages and the Prophets.

Just as we might recognise the pressing nature of the climate challenge, we must, as expressed in *Surat 103, Al-Asr*, simultaneously enjoin one another in 'truth' and 'patience'. As attempts are made to sell us carbon offsets and agrofuels, for example, we need to be mindful that the work required cannot simply be purchased. Such quick fixes can potentially distract or indeed deepen the structures that are the cause of the disruption.



Nature is a teacher, and as we witness it - through observing the changing of the seasons, the movement of the tide, the time taken for the moon to renew itself - we can reflect on the lesson of patience that it conveys as it brings forward the certainty of change. The extent to which we are challenged to transform requires that we take each step with the patience and wisdom needed for the direction to truly heal.





Thus, the spiritual and ecological message encapsulated in Islam requires revisiting and reawakening. In a world of seemingly endless consumption as referred to in *Surat 102, at-Takathar*, the need to curb our desires and wants for excess may need conscious work. Simultaneously, the negative impacts on our hearts of far-reaching advertising must be reversed.

As stated in the *Qur'an*

“Say: Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee; so fear God, O ye that understand that (so) ye may prosper”

(*Qur'an 5:100*).



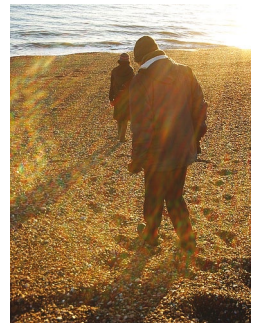
With the stream of corporate imagery, a commitment to effective spiritual practice to polish ourselves internally, and to help reconnect us to the *fitrah*, that natural state that is our birthright, is perhaps a necessary aspect of undoing the conditioning that such advertising is having on us.

A REVIVAL TOWARDS WHOLENESS



We may also wish to limit the degree to which advertising enters our homes such as via television, where we feel this may provide us with more freedom to be creative and to be ourselves. In moving away from corporate messages and towards silence and contemplation we are better able to listen to our true needs and those of others.

Our true needs may also become more apparent when we are reminded of our own Creator through reflecting on His signs, or *ayat*, in the form of the natural world which is His creation. With awareness, we can take a walk in the country, or spend time working on an allotment, thus nurturing our souls and helping us to transcend the stickiness of the material world and gain proximity to the Divine.





Of course, we as a diverse society must come together to challenge the political system and claim our collective, rightful ownership of it, as after all it is there to serve us. In doing so, we are in a better position to actualise our responsibilities.

THE POWER OF MANY

Our ecological responsibility is clear in Islamic teachings. Through disasters, we raise our heads as if coming out of a dream, turn to our loved ones, even strangers to offer solace. Yet we can awaken now, indeed our spiritual tradition asks this of us; and as we align ourselves to the *fitrah* we are offering solace to our world family for generations to come. Let us make a commitment to actualise our collective potential, and in so doing live more fully in harmony with the wider creation. If we can set ourselves firmly on this path today, the world will be a place that we would want for our children tomorrow.



Note on Qur'anic Concepts

The Qur'anic concepts touched on in this booklet are expanded on further in the following paper: *Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives & Engagement*. This is available via the following page on our website:
www.wisdominnature.org.uk/Resources/reading

However, with regards to the concept of *takathur*, we refer you to Muhammad Asad's commentary on 102:2.

Please note, we also facilitate workshops that enable participants to explore these concepts in depth and in a practical way.

Who Are We?

Wisdom In Nature is a process-oriented, Islamic ecological & community activist group. Our original name was the London Islamic Network for the Environment (LINE), a name that continues to run with our newer name for the time being. We engage in community activism through a practical, yet contemplative approach and recognise that individual and societal transformation is an essential basis for meaningful ecological work. We have a presence in both London and Brighton.

Our activities include deep dialogue, educational workshops and talks, climate change campaigning, and nature activities.

Workshops that we offer include: Islam & climate change; Islam & nature; Food, Muslims & wholeness; Permaculture & Islam; Basic facilitation skills; Diversity in activism; and more...

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, or would like to invite us to deliver a talk or workshop to your group. You can also find out more by calling us on 0845 456 3960 (local rate).

Our website is: www.wisdominnature.org.uk

Help Fund Our Work

Our day-to-day work is funded entirely by individual donations. This enables us to be independent of corporations and government, and to further the creative, grassroots approach that we are becoming known for. However, it also means that we depend on finances from people like yourself. We would thus like to invite you to give financially if you are able to do so, either through a single donation or a monthly standing order (e.g. £1, £2 or £5). This will support the furthering of our work including the wider distribution of literature such as this.

Our bank details are as follows:

Bank: The Cooperative Bank
Account number: 65173325
Sort code: 08-92-99

International Bank account no: GB28 CPBK 0892 9965 1733 25
Bank Identification Code: CPBK GB22

No amount is too small and *all* support is greatly appreciated.

Many thanks from Wisdom In Nature for supporting our work.

Useful Resources/Contacts

Climate Change Umbrella Bodies/Organisations

Camp for Climate Action - education, sustainable living, direct action and movement building around climate: www.climatecamp.org.uk

Campaign against Climate Change - one of our favourite climate umbrella groups: www.campaigncc.org

COIN (Climate Outreach and Information Network): www.coinet.org.uk

Energy Saving Trust - free and impartial advice on how to reduce energy wastage: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change): www.ipcc.ch

Stop Climate Chaos – coalition working to tackle climate change: www.stopclimatechaos.org

Finance/Economics

CCMJ (Christian Council for Monetary Justice): www.ccmj.org

Islamic Finance: www.islamic-finance.com

Money as Debt: Animated film about modern banking practises. Official website: www.moneyasdebt.net

New Economics Foundation: www.neweconomics.org

Food/Community/Peak Oil

Abraham Natural Produce (Devon): www.organic-halal-meat.com

BTCV - British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: www.btcv.org.uk

Farmers Markets Directory: www.farmersmarkets.net

Fast for the Planet: www.fastfortheplanet.net

Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens: www.farmgarden.org.uk

Gardening Organics (formerly HDRA): www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Permaculture Association (Britain) - Based on the philosophy of co-operation with nature and caring for the earth and its people: www.permaculture.org.uk

Soil Association: www.soilassociation.org

Transition Initiatives: www.transitiontowns.org

Willowbrook Organic Farm (Oxfordshire): www.willowbrookorganic.org

Group Development & Training

Seeds for Change – we've had Seeds for Change deliver us a couple of excellent workshops: www.seedsforchange.org.uk

Turning the Tide – another good one: www.turning-the-tide.org

Islamic Resources/Groups

DC Green Muslims (USA): www.dcgreenmuslims.blogspot.com

IFEES - Islamic Foundation for Ecology & Environmental Sciences: www.ifees.org.uk

IMASE - International Muslim Association of Scientists and Engineers: www.imase.org

Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives & Engagement - Probably the most comprehensive paper on the topic. Download from: www.wisdominnature.org.uk/Resources/reading

LINE – London Islamic Network for the Environment: This is what we used to be called!

MADE in Europe: www.madeineurope.org.uk

RITE - Reading Islamic Trustees for the Environment: www.rite.btik.com

ShINE - Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment: www.shineonline.org.uk

Wisdom In Nature (WIN): www.wisdominnature.org.uk (That's us!)

Travel

Airportwatch - A UK umbrella movement opposed to unsustainable aviation expansion: www.airportwatch.org.uk

Car Share/Lift Share: Just do a search on the net!

Cycle Maps - UK directory of official council cycle maps: www.cyclemaps.org.uk

Seat 61 – plan your route & travel abroad without flying: www.seat61.com

Sustrans – healthy, sustainable travelling options. E.g. cycling, walking: www.sustrans.org.uk

Transport for London - London travel using public transport: www.tfl.gov.uk

Other

Biofuelwatch: www.biofuelwatch.org.uk

Econexus – includes scientific critique of agrofuels (biofuels): www.econexus.info

Carbon Offsets – special issue “CO2nned”, from the New Internationalist: www.newint.org/issues/2006/07/01

Please note that Wisdom In Nature is not responsible for the content of any website or publication other than its own

From a small team of faith-inspired community activists...

This picture guide outlines an Islamic perspective on one of the most pressing challenges of our time. In simple language and with pictures, it introduces the following themes:

Disturbance of the Natural Order; A Call to the Fitrah; Unnatural Disasters; Islam: A Religion of Harmony; Fulfilling our Role as Khalifah; A Revival towards Wholeness; The Power of Many...

Climate Change is a signal that humankind has lost its course. By drawing on spiritual wisdom, we can respond to this call - this call to heal.

This booklet was produced by a team of community activists to educate, cultivate reflection and inspire holistic action to help build a fairer and more sustainable world for all.

www.wisdominnature.org.uk