



Statement of Fiqh Council of North America* on Fossil Fuel Divestment

(ADOPTED BY MEMBERS OF THE FIQH COUNCIL OF NORTH OF AMERICA* DURING THE ANNUAL GATHERING OF THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA IN HOUSTON, TEXAS USA AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1, 2019)

We recognize and re-affirm the scholarly work regarding the issues of Islam and the Environment which are found in existing Islamic statements, declarations and religious rulings on these matters. The 2015 Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change was put forward by groups of Muslim scholars, religious councils and organizations around the globe. We acknowledge the 2016 decision and public announcement of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) to divest all its financial assets from fossil fuel industries. We acknowledge that there is an urgent existential threat to the health, wellbeing and continuity of life on Earth. According to the Qur'an [*the highest source of Islamic teachings*], Allah [God] appointed human beings as His trustees [*stewards, guardians and caretakers*] of the Earth. As such, it is the individual and collective duty and responsibility of humanity to develop Allah's gifts of natural resources for its prosperity. This requires the maintenance of the delicate ecological balance, biodiversity and sustainability of all forms of life on earth. The Qur'an refers directly to such balance [*Al-Meezan*], not only on earth, but also in the cosmic order and warns against the disturbance of that balance [55:5-9] or corrupting the earth, land and sea, with its adverse effect on all people [30:41]. As humanity should take care of the earth, Allah created the earth also to take care of humanity [45:12-13], so long as we abstain from waste [6:141; 7:31].

The time to effectively respond with individual and collective actions to environmental challenges is extremely limited. Therefore, we call on all human beings; individuals, families, communities, scholars, religious and other institutions and governments, to urgently respond in a wise and unified and coordinated manner to the challenge of changing our individual behaviors and life style choices to ones which seek to conserve, not waste the divine gifts of life sustaining resources; to use , not abuse, these divine gifts. Many communities may find inspiration in drawing on their heritage, religious or otherwise that relates to conservation and sustainability.

Muslims, for example, can draw on the two-primary revelatory sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah [*way*] of Prophet Muhammed [*peace be upon him*], whose lifestyle and example embodied what Allah described him; mercy for the worlds [21:107]. It is notable that the Qur'an used the plural form of "world", thus implying that his mission of mercy embraces mercy to humans, animals, vegetation and resources.

At a fundamental level, this means that we must reduce our energy consumption in three primary areas that can make the greatest impact; 1) dramatically reduce emissions from our home energy use; 2) adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce food waste; 3) minimize automobile and air travel. While these life style changes are necessary, they may not be enough to stop and reverse the effects of global warming and climate change.

We affirm that it is the overwhelming consensus of climate scientists that this clear and present danger is caused by the continued burning of fossil fuels. To go beyond the 1.5-degree limit will endanger all human civilization and planetary life. Scientists are already projecting that 1 in four species, 1,000,000 species, are in danger of extinction by the end of this century. According to current scientific information, the burning of the proven reserves, presently identified by the fossil fuel industry, will create at least 3,000 gigatons of greenhouse gas emissions which is six times this threshold level. Clear, consistent, coordinated and effective action is essential. We therefore call upon all fellow humans to urgently invest, as much as possible, in renewable and clean energy sources and solutions [the green economy].

From an Islamic perspective, the supreme objectives [*Maqaasid*] of Islamic Shari'ah are: to protect faith; freedom of belief and worship for all [2:256; 18:29; 22:40]; sanctity of human life [5:32; 17:33], reason; progeny and private property. Failure to deal with the environmental dangers undermines those key objectives including life itself. Prophet Muhammed [*peace be upon him*] taught: "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm - ourselves and others". This applies to humans and non-humans, our present and our future. This hadith [*prophetic saying*] is the basis of one of several universal principles, such as "harm must be removed [or mitigated] "; "when it is not possible to avoid harm, then the lesser of the two harms should be tolerated to avoid the greater harm"; "avoidance of harm takes priority over the attainment of some benefit". These are the principles and wisdom that guide humanity at large.

We affirm that means exist to transform the entire energy systems in the U.S. and in Canada into fully renewable energy systems. Functioning examples already exist. We call on all to effectively contribute to the development, establishment and support of these systems. We acknowledge the need to contribute to the re-sequestration of carbon through the urgent development of tree planting projects through civic initiatives in the U.S., Canada and beyond. We also encourage Muslims to participate in as many tree planting projects as possible with other persons of faith and civic organizations. (*Carbon sequestration includes reforestation and improving forest management. Forests currently remove 25% of CO2 from the atmosphere as carbon sinks and cool the air. They are also key in the creation of regional rainfall in tropical areas for growing food.*)

We call for a shift to clean renewable energy based electric transport systems in Canada and the U.S and beyond. We call upon Islamic investment houses and other investment fund administrators and managers to immediately develop fossil free investment vehicles and portfolios that include investments in renewable and clean energy companies and. We stand ready to assist and advise in this process. In the end, Allah knows best.

The Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA) is a body of recognized and qualified Islamic Scholars from the United States and Canada who accept the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah as the primary sources of Islam. Furthermore, FCNA is guided by the judicial heritage of the Prophet's companions and the legal rulings and methodology of established classical normative Muslim Scholarship. The mission of FCNA is to provide guidance to the Muslims of North America in all matters related to Shari'ah (Islam's Sacred Law).

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