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Islamic Environmentalism in Indonesia: An Analytical Study of MUI Fatwas on Environmental Protection

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of Islamic environmental ethics, as articulated by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), in fatwas on environmental protection. Indonesia, with its large Muslim population, faces significant ecological issues, including climate change, forest burning, and resource depletion. Recognizing the urgency of these problems, MUI has issued several fatwas on topics such as environmentally friendly mining, wildlife conservation, waste management, forest burning, and climate change. This research aims to assess the effectiveness of these fatwas in fostering sustainable environmental practices among Indonesian Muslims, examining their alignment with Islamic teachings and their impact on public attitudes, behaviors, and policy. This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing document analysis and content analysis to explore the content and reception of MUI's fatwas. By analyzing the fatwas' theological foundations and practical implications, the research seeks to understand how Islamic environmental principles can mobilize religious communities to protect the environment. The results indicate that the fatwas are structured around Islamic principles, citing Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, and scholarly opinions, and provide recommendations for various stakeholders, including government officials, communities, and entrepreneurs. These fatwas emphasize collaborative efforts and advocate for responsible resource use and conservation, demonstrating that Islamic environmental ethics offer a valuable framework for addressing Indonesia's environmental crises and promoting sustainable practices.

Keywords: *Islamic Environmentalism; Environmental Protection; Fatwa MUI; Indonesia.*

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Introduction

The environmental crisis is one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, encompassing issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion [1]. As these problems intensify, there is an urgent call for diverse cultural, ethical, and religious frameworks to contribute to sustainable environmental solutions [2]. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, holds a unique position in this discourse. With over 230 million Muslims, the country is home to a vibrant Islamic community that shapes its social, political, and environmental landscapes. This community, guided by religious principles, has a deep connection to ecological stewardship, as Islamic teachings emphasize humanity's responsibility (*amanah*) as stewards (*khalifah*) of the earth. Islam views nature as a divine creation, a system of balance (*mizan*) that humans are entrusted to respect and protect, with numerous verses in the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*) stressing conservation, sustainability, and the prevention of environmental harm (*fasad*) [3].

In Islam, environmental stewardship is a core tenet, reflecting a fundamental responsibility to protect and preserve the natural world[4]. This principle is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, as emphasized in the Qur'an. For instance, in QS. Al-Baqarah: 205, it states: *"And when he turns away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allah does not like corruption."* This verse explicitly warns against actions that harm the environment, disrupt ecosystems, and result in the destruction of nature, underscoring the importance of sustainability and environmental protection [5]. It serves as a reminder for Muslims, and indeed all of humanity, to act responsibly in their interactions with the earth, refraining from behaviors that lead to environmental degradation. This ethical obligation aligns closely with broader global concerns about environmental sustainability, providing a religious framework that supports ecological preservation as an act of faith[6]. As such, the teachings of Islam offer a significant foundation for the development of environmental policies and practices within Muslim communities, encouraging actions that protect and enhance the balance of the earth's ecosystems.

In Indonesia, the Indonesian Council of Ulama, or Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), plays a critical role in guiding the Muslim population on socio-religious matters, including environmental ethics [4]. Founded in 1975, the MUI is the country's highest Islamic authority and has the responsibility of issuing fatwas, or religious rulings, to provide ethical and religious guidance on matters of public interest. [7] In recent years, recognizing the urgency of environmental degradation, the MUI has taken a proactive stance by issuing fatwas specifically

addressing environmental concerns. The 2011 fatwa on illegal wildlife poaching [8] and the 2014 fatwa on forest burning represent pioneering efforts by the MUI to address ecological issues through an Islamic lens [9]. These fatwas leverage Islamic principles to advocate for conservation, responsible resource use, and ecological protection, reflecting the organization's commitment to fostering an environmentally conscious ethic among Indonesian Muslims.

Given its position as an official religious body, the MUI holds substantial influence over how Islamic values are interpreted and practiced in Indonesia. This paper aims to explore how Islamic environmental ethics, as interpreted and promoted by the MUI, can serve as a powerful tool in addressing Indonesia's environmental challenges. By examining the theological foundations of Islam's environmental values and the MUI's efforts to respond to ecological degradation, this study seeks to highlight the potential of religious institutions to mobilize ethical, faith-based approaches to environmental protection. Furthermore, it assesses the MUI's role in advocating sustainable practices and promoting greater ecological stewardship among Indonesia's Muslim population, thereby reinforcing the alignment between Islamic values and environmental responsibility in the modern world.

Despite MUI's efforts, Indonesia continues to face severe environmental degradation, indicating potential gaps between religious guidance and on-ground environmental action. This raises several key questions: How effectively do MUI's fatwas address Indonesia's environmental problems? What are the limitations of these fatwas in shaping environmental policy or influencing public behavior? And to what extent can Islamic environmental ethics motivate sustainable practices in a predominantly Muslim society?

This study aims to examine how Islamic environmental principles, as interpreted by MUI, contribute to the discourse on environmental protection in Indonesia. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of MUI's fatwas in fostering environmental awareness and action, exploring the role of religion as a motivating force for ecological stewardship. The research also aims to identify the limitations of religious rulings in driving policy and behavior change, offering insights for bridging the gap between religious guidance and sustainable practices.

Islamic Perspectives on the Environment

Islamic Environmental Ethics (IEE) offers a holistic framework rooted in Islamic teachings, emphasizing humanity's moral and spiritual responsibility to safeguard and preserve the environment [10]. At its core lies the theological concept of Tawhid (the Oneness of God) [8], which underscores the interconnectedness of all creation. Humanity's role as stewards (khalifah) of the Earth is central to this framework, with a divine mandate to maintain balance, justice, and harmony in the natural world. Islamic teachings encourage a balanced relationship between humans and nature, integrating spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions to promote sustainable and ethical practices [11].

The principles of Islamic environmentalism are drawn from the Qur'an and Sunnah, offering profound ethical guidance on environmental stewardship. Key concepts such as Tawhid (oneness)[8], Khalifa (stewardship) [11], public welfare considerations (maslahah), avoiding corruption (Fasad), moderation (Israf) and Amanah (trust) form the foundation of this framework [4], emphasizing moral accountability in the use and management of natural resources. These principles not only guide individual and collective actions but also address contemporary environmental challenges. The emphasis on integrating these principles into modern practices demonstrates the potential of Islamic perspectives to foster environmental awareness and sustainability, contributing significantly to global environmental discourse.

The Concept of Stewardship (khalifah)

The concept of khalifah (stewardship) in Islam establishes humanity's fundamental role as vicegerents (khalifah al-ard) of God on Earth [12], emphasizing a profound responsibility to uphold the ethical balance in the natural world. This stewardship is grounded in the Islamic principle of amanah (trust), where humans act as both trustees and beneficiaries of the Earth, entrusted with its care and preservation on behalf of Allah [13]. The khalifah concept comprises three interconnected relationships: the relationship between humans and God, the relationship among humans, and the relationship between humans and the rest of creation. This holistic framework mandates responsible management of the environment in accordance with divine guidance, ensuring that human actions do not disrupt the natural harmony but rather contribute to its preservation for future generations.

Islamic environmental ethics assert that while humans are granted authority over the Earth, this authority is not absolute but must align with Allah's commands. Resources are seen not as possessions but as trusts (amanah) that require ethical and sustainable management. Islamic law advocates for the

responsible exploitation of natural resources, emphasizing preservation and sustainability. This ethical stewardship is closely linked with the concept of mizan (divine balance), which calls for maintaining equilibrium in the environment and warns against actions that could disrupt the natural order [11]. The Qur'an, particularly in verses like QS Al-Hadid (57:40), underscores the importance of safeguarding this balance, reflecting the interdependence of the natural world and the necessity for responsible environmental governance [12]. These principles align Islamic teachings with global efforts for environmental justice and sustainable development [14], [26].

The Concept of Balance (Mizan)

The principle of mizan (balance) is a cornerstone of Islamic environmental ethics, emphasizing the intricate and perfect equilibrium of the universe, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This balance, established by God, imposes a duty on humans to protect and maintain it. Surah Al-Hadid (57:40) underscores this responsibility, highlighting humanity's role as wise stewards and protectors of the environment. Every element within the universe has a specific purpose, and humanity is entrusted with ensuring that this divine equilibrium remains intact. Any failure to uphold this responsibility leads to environmental imbalance, with far-reaching negative consequences for all interconnected elements of the natural world [15].

This interconnected perspective aligns with modern scientific understandings of ecological balance. While the concept of ecological balance, as formalized by the United Nations in 1997, is relatively recent, its foundational principles are deeply embedded in the Qur'an. Islam thus anticipates contemporary ecological concerns, offering a timeless framework for sustainable environmental practices. By aligning their actions with the principle of mizan, humans can contribute to preserving the delicate network of connections that sustain life and prevent the cascading effects of ecological disruption [16].

Public welfare considerations (maslahah)

In Islam, the principle of maslahah (public welfare) is integral to environmental protection, aligning with the maqasid ash-shari'ah (objectives of Islamic law) [17]. These objectives safeguard five essential elements: religion (ad-din), soul (an-nafs), intellect (al-'aql), lineage (an-nasl), and property (al-mal). Environmental degradation threatens these core human needs, as it harms health (an-nafs), disrupts economic stability (al-mal), and jeopardizes future generations (an-nasl) [18]. Thus, protecting the environment is essential for public welfare, ensuring a sustainable future for all.

The maqasid ash-shari'ah framework underscores that environmental protection is not just an ethical obligation but a legal imperative to ensure the common good. Responsible resource use aligns with hifz al-mal (protection of property) and hifz an-nafs (protection of life), as environmental damage can lead to health crises and economic instability [19]. Islam views the Earth as a trust from Allah, and safeguarding the environment is seen as a way to protect these essential aspects of human life, balancing development with sustainability.

The implementation of Islamic principles for environmental preservation is a collective obligation for all Muslims. However, in the context of modern environmental challenges, clear and practical guidelines are essential to assist the ummah in fulfilling this responsibility effectively [20]. To provide such guidance, the Islamic Fatwa Institute plays a crucial role by issuing fatwas specifically addressing environmental protection. The development of these fatwas must be firmly rooted in Islamic law, ensuring alignment with its foundational principles. This process often involves employing established methodologies of Islamic jurisprudence, such as qiyas (analogical reasoning), maslahah (public welfare considerations), and maqasid al-shari'ah (the higher objectives of Islamic law) [21]. By incorporating these tools, fatwas can address contemporary environmental issues while remaining faithful to the ethical and legal framework of Islam. Such an approach not only reinforces the religious significance of environmental stewardship but also provides Muslims with actionable and contextually relevant guidelines. By doing so, Islamic jurisprudence can play a pivotal role in fostering sustainable practices and addressing the global environmental crisis within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Islamic Legal Foundations for Environmental Protection

Islam conceptualizes nature as a divine creation and a responsibility entrusted to humanity by Allah. The Quran and Sunnah provide numerous directives discouraging environmental harm while promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. These teachings closely align with modern environmental law, offering insights into humanity's role in stewardship [22],[23]. Islamic law (fiqh) emphasizes the necessity of living in harmony with nature, providing a roadmap for environmental protection[24],[25]. In Islamic law, the preservation of natural resources such as water holds a special place. Water is viewed as a vital source of life and must be utilized equitably and responsibly. Islamic legal principles emphasize that water resources should not be polluted, and everyone should have fair access to them [22], [26]. This perspective establishes a robust foundation for maintaining environmental balance through both individual and collective responsibilities.

Environmental Protection Principles within Islamic Law

The dynamic adaptability of Islamic law further enhances its relevance to environmental ethics. Islamic law is grounded in two primary sources: the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, and the Sunna, which encompasses the words, actions, and decisions of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in hadith [12]. Together, these foundational texts provide the basis for Islamic legal and ethical guidance. However, as societies evolved, new challenges arose that were not explicitly addressed in the Qur'an or Sunna [17]. To address these issues, Islamic scholars developed methodologies for legal reasoning to derive rulings, a process known as *ijtihad*.

The toolkit for *ijtihad* includes several key approaches. *Ijma* (scholarly consensus) reflects the collective agreement of Islamic scholars on a particular issue, lending authority to legal rulings [18]. *Qiyas* (analogical reasoning) involves drawing parallels between new issues and established rulings based on shared principles. *Maslahah* (public welfare considerations) emphasizes the role of law in promoting societal well-being, while *maqasid as-shari'a* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) seeks to align rulings with the core purposes of the *Shari'a*, such as justice, mercy, and the preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property. These tools ensure that Islamic law remains dynamic and adaptable to contemporary legal, political, and social contexts.

Maqasid al-Shariah and the Environment

One of the fundamental objectives of Islamic law, *Maqasid al-Shariah* (the purposes of *Shariah*), is grounded in principles that protect human life, property, intellect, lineage, and faith. These principles are closely connected to environmental conservation, as the environment is essential for the sustainability of human life. *Maqasid al-Shariah* provides a framework for addressing environmental issues such as the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of waste. For instance, it emphasizes the necessity of avoiding the misuse of scarce resources such as water. Islamic law promotes the sustainable management of resources and the preservation of access to these resources for future generations [14].

In this context, the concepts of the green economy and sustainable development align harmoniously with *Maqasid al-Shariah*. These principles serve as a guide in developing solutions to modern environmental challenges. For example, economic activities must be conducted in a manner that does not harm natural resources and ensures sustainability [27]. This approach aims to establish a balance between environmental protection, social well-being, and economic progress.

Environmental Management Through Usul al-Fiqh

Usul al-Fiqh (the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence), a sub-discipline of Islamic law, examines the sources and principles of Islamic legal rulings. This methodology can be applied to contemporary issues such as environmental protection. The principle of *istislah* (public interest) is particularly significant for ensuring environmental sustainability. Islamic law employs this principle to promote environmental conservation and the equitable distribution of natural resources [24].

Usul al-Fiqh serves as a guiding framework for shaping environmental policies. For instance, it emphasizes the consideration of both individual and collective benefits when formulating regulations related to the environment. The principle of *maslahah* (general welfare) supports the prohibition of activities that harm the environment and advocates for the preservation of natural resources for future generations [27]. In this context, Usul al-Fiqh provides Islamic perspectives and solutions to address modern environmental challenges.

Sustainable Development and Islamic Law

Islamic law provides a robust ethical and legal framework that promotes a balance between economic development and environmental preservation. *Maqashid al-Shariah* (the objectives of Shariah) emphasizes the prioritization of individual and societal welfare by supporting the sustainable management of resources and minimizing the environmental impacts of economic activities [14]. This approach is directly connected to the increasingly prominent concept of the "green economy" in modern environmental policies.

The green economy advocates for the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of waste while simultaneously targeting economic growth. Islamic law supports the principles underpinning this model. For example, it explicitly mandates that economic activities should not harm the environment and must be conducted with a sense of responsibility toward humanity and nature [23], [28]. Historical *waqf* (endowment) systems, which included water conservation projects, demonstrate how these principles were applied in practice [29]. In this context, the principles of *maslahah* (public interest) and *istislah* (general welfare) serve as effective tools for establishing a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability [24]. These concepts are deeply embedded in the Islamic legal philosophy and reflect a broader ethical responsibility to maintain harmony with nature [30].

Role of Islamic Institutions in Environmental Protection

Islamic institutions are integral components of the Muslim Ummah and share the collective obligation as caliphs (stewards) to protect nature and the environment. As entities grounded in Islamic principles, these institutions bear significant responsibility in safeguarding the natural world and promoting environmental sustainability. Each Islamic institution operates with distinct duties and roles, tailored to its foundational objectives and scope of influence. These roles may include raising environmental awareness, advocating for sustainable practices, implementing eco-friendly initiatives, and issuing religious guidance to align environmental conservation with Islamic values. By fulfilling these roles, Islamic institutions can effectively contribute to the preservation of the environment, ensuring that their actions reflect the broader mission of stewardship entrusted to humanity by God.

In the contemporary Islamic world, the principles of Islamic Environmental Ethics have been integrated into various policies and legal frameworks, demonstrating their relevance in addressing modern environmental challenges [12]. Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan have incorporated environmental protection into their national legal systems, reflecting the importance of environmental care within the context of Islamic teachings. In Saudi Arabia, the government introduced the General Environment Law in 2001, which draws from Islamic law and underscores the responsibility of the caliphate (khalifah) in safeguarding the environment [31]. This law exemplifies how Islamic principles can shape legislative approaches to environmental stewardship.

In Indonesia, Islamic institutions play a significant role in addressing global challenges, including environmental protection and climate change, by providing religiously grounded guidance and practical frameworks for action. In Indonesia, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) stands as the leading fatwa-issuing authority, playing a critical role in responding to contemporary issues that affect both the environment and society [32]. As an umbrella organization comprising representatives from various Islamic organizations across the country, MUI serves as a bridge between Islamic principles and modern governance, offering religious rulings (fatwas) that align with both Islamic law and contemporary societal needs [33]. The Council is entrusted with several core functions, including providing religious guidance to the Muslim community, issuing fatwas on a wide range of issues, and mediating between the government and religious scholars to ensure the integration of Islamic values into state policies.

Additionally, MUI fosters cooperation among Islamic organizations and scholars to strengthen collective efforts in guiding the community, particularly in promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices [34]. Through its fatwas, MUI offers a moral and ethical foundation for addressing environmental challenges, emphasizing principles such as tawhid (the Oneness of God), khalifah (stewardship), and amanah (trust). By addressing specific environmental concerns like deforestation, water conservation, and pollution, MUI positions Islam as a proactive force in tackling global issues. This approach highlights the essential role of Islamic institutions in fostering sustainability and promoting environmentally conscious behaviors within the framework of faith-based leadership and advocacy.

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) holds the authority to issue fatwas on a wide range of Sharia-related matters, including those concerning faith, Sharia law, social and cultural issues, societal concerns, and environmental protection. This authority is exercised with a commitment to upholding the principles of truth and the purity of religious practices among Muslims in Indonesia [35]. When addressing these issues, including environmental concerns, MUI evaluates them based on their significance to Muslims at a national level or on their potential impact on local religious issues that might influence broader regions. This broad scope highlights MUI's critical role in providing religious guidance that aligns with Islamic values while addressing contemporary challenges, including the pressing need for environmental sustainability [36].

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has responded to environmental issues through a series of fatwas. These fatwas exhibit three distinct characteristics in their relation to climate change: direct, indirect, and conceptual connections. Despite these efforts, MUI has yet to issue a fatwa that explicitly addresses climate change as a standalone issue, unlike similar religious authorities in countries such as Egypt [4].

The absence of a comprehensive fatwa specifically targeting climate change highlights an area for growth in MUI's environmental agenda. Issuing such a fatwa would not only strengthen Indonesia's climate action framework but also establish MUI's position on climate change as a critical global challenge. Furthermore, it could play a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of Indonesian Muslims by fostering greater awareness and engagement with climate issues through the lens of Islamic teachings. This, in turn, could lead to increased community participation in sustainable practices, further amplifying national and global efforts to address climate change [37].

Environmental Issues in Indonesia

Indonesia, as a country rich in natural resources and biodiversity, faces numerous environmental challenges that threaten its ecosystems and the livelihoods of its people. Among these, deforestation, air and water pollution, and marine degradation are the most pressing. These issues have profound implications for Indonesia's commitment to sustainability, its role in global environmental governance, and the well-being of future generations.

One of the most significant environmental issues in Indonesia is deforestation. The country once boasted the world's third-largest rainforest coverage, with nearly 80% of its land area covered in forests during the 1960s. However, unsustainable practices and economic activities have drastically reduced forest cover. By 2001, forest coverage had declined to 50%, and since 2000, Indonesia has lost an additional 18% of its tree cover. A key driver of this deforestation is the expansion of palm oil plantations, which account for 23% of total forest loss. As the world's largest producer of palm oil, supplying 59% of global demand, Indonesia faces intense pressure to balance economic development with environmental conservation [38].

Rising Sea Levels present a growing threat to Indonesia, which boasts the world's second-largest coastline and over 17,000 islands. Many of these islands are low-lying, making them particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change [39]. Global sea levels are rising at an accelerating pace, and estimates suggest that by the end of the century, 115 islands could be submerged [38]. This would render large portions of the coastline uninhabitable, displacing a significant portion of the 60% of Indonesia's population that resides in coastal areas. The social and economic impacts of such displacement are profound, with vulnerable communities facing the loss of homes, livelihoods, and cultural heritage [40].

Increasing forest fires compound Indonesia's environmental crisis, contributing to significant forest loss and air pollution [9]. While deforestation for agricultural expansion has long been a problem, forest fires—often set intentionally for slash-and-burn land clearing—have become more frequent and severe [41]. Since 2001, these fires have accounted for 10% of the country's total forest loss. The situation is exacerbated by drier conditions caused by climate change, leading to uncontrollable fires that devastate ecosystems and release large amounts of greenhouse gases [38].

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Indonesia must prioritize sustainable practices, enforce stricter regulations, and enhance climate resilience through policy reform and technological innovation. Equally important is the engagement of local

communities, whose participation in conservation and sustainable development is crucial. In the Indonesian context, all parties need to be involved in overcoming this problem, such as the government, NGOs, Islamic institutions, and also all levels of society [42].

In Indonesia, efforts to protect the environment have been supported by various Islamic institutions and community organizations, reflecting a collective commitment to environmental stewardship. Institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI), Muhammadiyah, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Islamic educational organizations have issued regulations and fatwas encouraging their members and society at large to engage in environmental preservation [34]. These initiatives demonstrate the active role of Islamic institutions in addressing environmental challenges, fostering a sense of shared responsibility among individuals and communities to uphold sustainable practices. By integrating religious teachings with environmental advocacy, these efforts aim to create a holistic approach to maintaining ecological balance and promoting awareness at all levels of society [15].

Method

This research will adopt a qualitative research design to explore the role of Islamic environmentalism and the influence of MUI's fatwas in shaping environmental behavior in Indonesia. By using a qualitative approach, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how MUI's fatwas on environmental issues impact religious followers' attitudes and behaviors toward environmental sustainability [43]. The research will employ a descriptive-analytical approach to analyze the content of the fatwas issued by MUI, examining how these legal rulings align with Islamic teachings on the environment and their practical implications in Indonesian society. The analysis will focus on evaluating the fatwas' influence on public attitudes, social behaviors, and government policies regarding environmental protection.

Data for this study will be collected through a combination of literature review, document analysis, and content analysis. The literature review will examine existing scholarly works on Islamic environmental ethics, fatwas, and the role of religious authorities in environmental issues, providing a theoretical framework for understanding the topic. Document analysis will focus on the texts of MUI's fatwas on environmental concerns such as mining, wildlife conservation, waste management, forest burning, and climate change. Lastly, content analysis will be used to evaluate media reports, public statements, and discussions surrounding these fatwas to assess their reception among the broader Muslim population and their practical impact on Indonesian environmental policies.

The fatwas analyzed in this study will be limited to those issued by MUI regarding environmental issues, such as:

1. Fatwa No. 22 (2011) on environmentally friendly mining [44],
2. Fatwa No. 04 (2014) on the preservation of endangered species [45],
3. Fatwa No. 41 (2014) on waste management [46],
4. Fatwa No. 30 (2016) on forest and land burning [47],
5. Fatwa No. 86 (2023) on climate change [48].

Result and Discussion

The environmental challenges faced by Indonesia demand collective efforts from various stakeholders to address them effectively. As an independent and religious institution, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) plays a significant role in tackling these issues by issuing fatwas related to environmental preservation. The literature reveals that MUI holds a unique position in environmental protection in Indonesia. As an Islamic institution tasked with educating and guiding the Muslim community, MUI's fatwas serve as valuable references for Muslims in Indonesia—a country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

The literature indicates that MUI has issued several fatwas related to environmentally sustainable practices. These include fatwas on environmentally friendly mining practices [44], wildlife conservation [45], waste management [46], the prohibition of land and forest burning [47], and climate change [48]. These fatwas reflect MUI's commitment to addressing various environmental issues and its active participation in promoting environmental stewardship.

Although MUI fatwas are not legally binding, they hold substantial moral and religious authority among Indonesian Muslims. As a government-recognized institution with the authority to issue fatwas, MUI's legitimacy reinforces its influence and ensures that its guidance resonates with the Muslim community. Research by Pelu [49] highlights that MUI's fatwas are widely accepted by society and often referenced when addressing environmental concerns. This acceptance underscores the effectiveness of MUI's contributions to environmental protection.

The fatwas issued by MUI are directly connected to pressing environmental issues in Indonesia, such as the recurrent problem of land and forest burning and the environmental degradation caused by mining activities. These fatwas provide a framework for sustainable practices, emphasizing the ethical and religious dimensions of environmental protection. Consequently, MUI has demonstrated its pivotal role in guiding Indonesian Muslims towards

environmental preservation and has contributed to shaping a collective response to environmental challenges in the country.

Fatwa on Environmentally Friendly Mining

The Fatwa No. 22 of 2011 on environmentally friendly mining practices issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) reflects a comprehensive integration of Islamic principles with ecological and socio-economic considerations. This fatwa demonstrates MUI's commitment to addressing the environmental challenges posed by mining activities in Indonesia. The considerations behind this fatwa are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, particularly the principles of stewardship (Khalifah), promoting public welfare (maslahah), and avoiding corruption (fasad).

In addition to Islamic principles, the fatwa incorporates ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, providing a balanced framework that aligns with contemporary environmental and development needs in Indonesia. The decision is underpinned by various Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, including Qur'anic references such as QS Lukman (31:20), QS Al-Hajj (22:65), QS Al-Baqarah (2:29), and QS Al-Nisa (4:59) emphasize human responsibility as stewards of the earth and the importance of sustainable resource use. From Hadith references; this fatwa cited from Hadiths narrated by Muslims and others highlights the shared ownership of natural resources and the prohibition of harm to oneself or others, reinforcing ethical resource management.

The fatwa identifies specific types of environmental damage caused by mining, defining it as direct or indirect changes to the physical, chemical, or biological properties of the environment that exceed acceptable standards. This definition is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where resource exploitation frequently leads to significant environmental degradation.

The fatwa outlines several key provisions to ensure environmentally responsible mining practices:

- Mining projects must undergo rigorous feasibility assessments to ensure they meet environmental standards.
- Operations must adopt practices that minimize environmental harm, including avoiding damage to ecosystems, preventing water and air pollution, and mitigating impoverishment in surrounding communities.
- Continuous monitoring is required during mining activities, along with post-mining reclamation, restoration, and rehabilitation.
- Mining outcomes should align with food security goals, benefit local communities, and adhere to constitutional mandates.

The fatwa explicitly calls for avoiding mafsadah (damage), which includes ecosystem destruction, pollution, and social harm. This aligns with the Islamic ethical framework of preventing harm and promoting welfare (jalb al-masalih).

Overall, the fatwa on environmentally friendly mining practices reflects MUI's proactive stance on environmental protection in Indonesia. It serves as a guide for Muslims to engage in resource extraction responsibly, emphasizing sustainability and ethical stewardship. While the fatwa is not legally binding, it carries significant moral and religious authority, influencing both public attitudes and policy approaches to environmental management [50]. By aligning Islamic principles with practical ecological considerations, MUI demonstrates its role as a critical factor in addressing environmental challenges in Indonesia.

Fatwa on Preservation of Endangered Species

The Fatwa on the Preservation of Endangered Species issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) presents a comprehensive religious and ethical framework for addressing the critical issue of species extinction in Indonesia[51]. The fatwa provides clear guidelines for how Islamic principles can be applied to the preservation of biodiversity, emphasizing both environmental responsibility and human welfare.

One of the primary considerations behind this fatwa is the recognition of the human role in the extinction of species, which is attributed to human error or exploitation. This aligns with the Islamic concept of stewardship (Khalifah), which emphasizes that humans are entrusted by God to protect and manage the earth's resources responsibly. The fatwa also invokes maslahah (public welfare), highlighting that preserving endangered species is not just an ecological necessity but also serves the collective good of society. It stresses that maintaining ecological balance and preventing harm to the environment are key to safeguarding future generations.

The fatwa is rooted in Quranic teachings and Hadiths that reinforce the ethical imperative to protect animals. For instance, Quranic verses such as QS Al-An'am (6:38) and QS Al-Baqarah (2:164) emphasize the diversity of creation and the duty to protect it. Additionally, the fatwa draws on Hadiths that prohibit unnecessary harm to animals, such as the narration about the prohibition of killing certain species like ants, bees, and hudhud birds, and the punishment for torturing animals. These religious texts are used as moral guidance to justify the legal ruling and to frame the protection of endangered species as a religious duty.

The fatwa's legal provisions further outline practical measures to balance human interests with animal preservation. Point 1 asserts that all creatures have the right to live and be utilized for human benefit, which is not contradictory to

the later point about the permissible use of animals. It emphasizes that the utilization of endangered species must serve the greater public interest—particularly in ways that do not harm the species or the environment. The fatwa thus permits the use of endangered species for purposes like ecotourism, education, and research, provided these activities contribute positively to the ecosystem and society. This approach aligns with the Islamic concept of *mizan* (balance), which calls for a careful and just utilization of natural resources that does not upset the natural order.

Additionally, Point 6 of the fatwa strictly prohibits actions that harm or exploit endangered animals in ways that threaten their extinction, with exceptions only for *shar'i* reasons (legitimate Islamic justifications), such as the protection of human life. This provision underscores the Islamic ethical stance that any harm to living creatures should be avoided unless there is an overriding necessity, such as safeguarding human well-being.

Fatwa on Waste Management

The Fatwa No. 4 of 2014 issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) addresses the critical issue of endangered animal conservation in Indonesia, highlighting the alarming threat of extinction faced by various species, including tigers, rhinos, elephants, orangutans, and diverse range of reptiles, mammals, and birds[52]. These threats are primarily attributed to human activities that exploit and harm animals and their habitats. MUI's considerations for issuing this fatwa are deeply rooted in Islamic principles, such as stewardship (*khalifah*), which emphasizes humans' responsibility as caretakers of the earth; public welfare (*maslahah*), which underscores the importance of preserving animal species to maintain ecological balance; and avoiding corruption (*fasad*), which prohibits the exploitation and destruction of natural habitats.

The fatwa derives its legitimacy from the Qur'an and Hadith. Qur'anic verses such as QS Al-An'am (6:38), QS Al-Qashash (28:77), QS Al-Baqarah (2:30), and QS Al-A'raf (7:56) stress the interconnectedness of all living beings, humanity's role as stewards, and the prohibition of corruption on earth. Additionally, Hadiths narrated by Abu Dawud, al-Turmudzi, and al-Hakim highlight compassion for all creatures, with the promise of divine love for those who show kindness. Other Hadiths prohibit harming certain animals, emphasizing respect for their intrinsic value and ecological role.

The legal provisions outlined in the fatwa establish a framework for the conservation of endangered animals. First, it affirms the right of all creatures to live and contribute to the ecosystem, making the protection and preservation of endangered species a human obligation. Second, it permits the utilization of endangered animals for ecotourism, education, research, and environmental

security, provided such actions align with Islamic principles and national laws. Third, it strictly prohibits actions that harm, persecute, hunt, or threaten the extinction of endangered species, with exceptions granted only for legitimate shar'i reasons, such as safeguarding human life.

This fatwa demonstrates a nuanced approach to conservation by balancing ethical treatment with sustainable utilization. While acknowledging the potential for human benefit from endangered species, it emphasizes ecological balance and aligns utilization practices with Islamic ethical principles. By grounding conservation in Islamic teachings, MUI provides moral and religious guidance to Indonesia's Muslim-majority population, fostering greater public awareness and behavioral changes toward environmental stewardship. The issuance of this fatwa reflects MUI's proactive stance in addressing environmental challenges and positions it as a key actor in promoting Islamic environmentalism in Indonesia. Through its religious authority, MUI influences societal attitudes and policies, contributing significantly to both national and global conservation efforts.

Fatwa on Prohibition of Forest and Land Burning

The Fatwa No. 30 of 2016 issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) addresses the critical issue of forest and land burning, emphasizing the importance of responsible forest utilization and environmental protection. The fatwa focuses on the Islamic principle of preventing damage (*fasad*), which is a cornerstone of Islamic environmental ethics. Al-Damkhi [53] highlights forest burning as a form of human-induced damage that must be avoided. This principle is supported by references to various Qur'anic verses such as QS Al-Baqarah (2:60), QS Al-Rum (30:41), and QS Al-Nisa' (4:59), as well as Hadiths that underscore the responsibility of humans to act as stewards of the earth.

In formulating this fatwa, MUI undertook comprehensive studies, including literature reviews, legal analysis, workshops, field visits, and consultations with diverse stakeholders. The outcome of these efforts is a decisive ruling that forest and land burning, which causes environmental damage, pollution, economic losses, health issues, and other negative impacts, is strictly prohibited (*haram*). The prohibition extends to individuals or entities that facilitate, permit, or benefit from such practices. Furthermore, the fatwa mandates controlling forest and land fires as a collective responsibility.

While the fatwa permits forest and land utilization under specific conditions, these conditions aim to ensure sustainability and public welfare. Utilization is allowed if it involves legal ownership, necessary permits from competent authorities, serves the public interest, and avoids environmental damage or adverse impacts, including pollution. Despite these allowances,

Islamic scholars, including Gade [51], advocate for forest preservation by avoiding burning, and emphasize the need for continuous preaching to discourage such harmful practices.

This fatwa reflects MUI's commitment to integrating Islamic teachings into environmental governance in Indonesia. By addressing forest and land burning through a religious lens, the fatwa not only provides ethical guidance to Muslims but also aligns with national and global efforts to combat deforestation and environmental degradation. It underscores the importance of preserving natural resources as a form of stewardship and collective responsibility, reinforcing the principle that environmental protection is a moral and religious obligation. Through this ruling, MUI contributes to fostering environmental awareness and sustainable practices in Indonesia, leveraging its religious authority to promote ecological conservation.

Fatwa on Climate Change Control

The MUI Fatwa on the law of controlling global climate change, issued in 2023, reflects the council's responsiveness to urgent global challenges affecting Indonesia and the broader world[54]. Fatwa No. 86/2023 is anchored in Islamic principles such as stewardship (khalifah) and avoiding corruption (fasad), which serve as guiding frameworks for addressing climate issues. The fatwa draws on various Qur'anic verses, including QS Al-Baqarah (2:60), QS Al-Rum (30:41), and QS Al-A'raf (7:56), among others, to emphasize the moral and spiritual imperative to protect the environment. It also references key Hadiths, such as those narrated by Abu Dawud and Ahmad about planting seeds even when the end of the world is imminent, as well as Hadiths emphasizing the avoidance of harm and wrongdoing.

The fatwa declares actions contributing to environmental degradation and exacerbating the climate crisis as haram (prohibited). It underscores the responsibility of humanity, as Allah's stewards on earth, to engage in mitigation and adaptation efforts. These include reducing carbon footprints beyond essential needs, transitioning to fair and sustainable energy systems, and promoting practices that contribute to climate resilience.

This fatwa aligns Islamic teachings with contemporary environmental governance by leveraging religious principles to address the pressing challenge of climate change. By framing the issue within the ethical and spiritual context of Islam, MUI provides a strong moral foundation for environmental responsibility, advocating for sustainable practices that reflect the values of justice, stewardship, and care for creation [55].

In summary, the 2023 fatwa highlights MUI's consistent approach to integrating Islamic teachings into its guidance on environmental issues. It utilizes the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic principles as the cornerstone for its rulings, offering a comprehensive and faith-based perspective on climate action. The issuance of this fatwa underscores the role of religious authority in promoting ecological awareness and action, demonstrating the potential of faith-based frameworks to address global challenges like climate change. (Refer to Table 1.)

Table 1. Key Points of MUI Fatwas on the Environment

Fatwa No.	Title of Fatwa	Key Focus	Islamic Principles	Environmental Impact
No.22 (2011)	Environmentally Friendly Mining	Promotes sustainable mining practices that minimize environmental damage.	Stewardship (khalifah), public welfare considerations (masalahah), Avoiding Corruption (Fasad)	Aims to reduce environmental degradation caused by irresponsible mining.
No.04 (2014)	Preservation of Endangered Species	Focuses on preserving endangered species to maintain ecosystem balance.	Stewardship (khalifah), public welfare considerations (masalahah), Balance (Mizan), Avoiding Corruption (Fasad)	Encourages conservation efforts and protection of biodiversity in Indonesia.
No.41 (2014)	Waste Management	Advocates for proper waste management to prevent pollution and environmental damage.	Stewardship (khalifah), Moderation (Israf)	Aims to reduce waste and promote recycling, supporting cleaner communities.
No.30 (2016)	Prohibition of Forest and Land Burning	Prohibits land and forest burning, which causes deforestation and pollution.	Avoiding Corruption (Fasad)	Seeks to reduce air pollution, deforestation, and related health issues.
No.86 (2023)	Climate Change Control	Calls for actions to control climate change and mitigate its global impact.	Stewardship (khalifah), Avoiding Corruption (Fasad)	Encourages climate action to address global warming and environmental crises.

Source: Author's compilation from MUI Fatwas

The principle of mizan (balance) is not explicitly highlighted in the environmental protection fatwas discussed, but its essence is indirectly addressed, particularly in Fatwa No. 4/2014 on the protection of endangered animals. This fatwa emphasizes maintaining the balance of nature, aligning with the concept of mizan. Similarly, in the fatwa on the prohibition of forest and land burning, the MUI allows the utilization of forest land under specific terms and conditions [56]. This permission reflects the principle of mizan, requiring a balanced approach in using natural resources to ensure sustainability and ecological harmony.

All the discussed fatwas share a consistent structure, beginning with considerations of Islamic principles alongside general principles. They then cite Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, and sometimes the opinions of scholars or fiqh rules to provide a robust foundation for the rulings. A notable feature of these fatwas is their comprehensive nature, which includes recommendations directed toward various stakeholders. These stakeholders, including government authorities, legislatures, local administrations, entrepreneurs, communities, religious leaders, and the general public, are urged to respect the rulings and actively participate in environmental conservation activities.

The inclusion of stakeholders in these fatwas underscores the collaborative approach required to address environmental challenges. It reflects the holistic nature of Islamic environmental ethics, which integrates religious, social, and legal dimensions. The fatwas collectively advocate for responsible resource use and proactive measures to protect the environment, reinforcing the idea that environmental stewardship is a shared responsibility grounded in Islamic principles.

Conclusion

Indonesia, as a vast nation with one of the largest Muslim populations globally, faces significant environmental challenges that require urgent attention. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), as a prominent Islamic institution, plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges through the issuance of fatwas. These fatwas serve as important guidelines for Muslims in Indonesia, aligning Islamic teachings with contemporary environmental issues. By providing religious and ethical frameworks for environmental stewardship, MUI's fatwas guide the Muslim community in adopting practices that promote sustainability and the protection of natural resources, contributing to the broader efforts to resolve the country's environmental problems.

The various fatwas issued by the MUI on environmental protection issues such as environmentally friendly mining, the preservation of endangered

species, waste management, the prohibition of forest and land burning, and climate change control collectively emphasize the Islamic responsibility for environmental stewardship. Each fatwa integrates key Islamic principles, including stewardship (khalifah), public welfare (maslahah), and avoiding corruption (Fasad), while grounding their decisions in Quranic verses and Hadiths. These fatwas not only highlight the importance of preserving nature and ensuring sustainable development but also demonstrate the alignment of Islamic teachings with global environmental challenges. By emphasizing the balance of nature and human responsibility, the fatwas call on all stakeholders – governments, communities, religious leaders, and individuals – to adopt practices that protect the environment and foster long-term ecological sustainability.

The legal provisions within these fatwas offer practical guidance for managing natural resources responsibly. For example, the prohibition of harmful practices like forest and land burning, the regulation of mining activities, and the preservation of endangered species are all based on the need to maintain ecological balance and prevent harm to the environment. At the same time, the fatwas recognize the necessity of utilizing natural resources for human benefit in a manner that respects Shariah and ensures the greater good. These fatwas provide a comprehensive framework that blends Islamic ethical principles with modern environmental challenges, advocating for a sustainable future that respects both humanity and the planet.

Author Contributions

Iskandar: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Hadi Sofuoğlu:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

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