

## The Principle of Islah (Consideration of Public Interest) and Its Impact on the Sustainability of Vegetation Cover the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Mohammed Ali M. Alasmari<sup>1</sup> and Ali Abduh m Osaim Hakami<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

*This study explores the impact of the concept of Islah (reform) in Islamic jurisprudence on the development of environmental protection policies. It considers efforts to protect vegetation cover and combat desertification as part of significant interests aimed at benefiting society and preventing the harm of desertification. Furthermore, the research underscores the necessity to enhance awareness about the importance of vegetation cover, ensure strict implementation of regulations, and encourage sustainable agricultural and environmental projects. It also highlights the close relationship between Islamic jurisprudence and environmental efforts, affirming the role of Islamic principles in guiding environmental policies towards sustainable development and maintaining ecological balance.*

**Keywords:** Principle of Islah, Consideration of Public Interest, Sustainability, Vegetation Cover

### **INTRODUCTION**

Significant attention has been directed towards environmental issues, forest development, and vegetation cover, with Islam showing considerable interest in this area. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged land cultivation and care for plants, stating, "If a Muslim plants a plant or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (sadaqah) for him." Consequently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has enacted legislations that enhance the public interest of citizens, aimed at revitalizing the land through the development of forests, vegetation cover, and combating desertification. This led to the issuance of the regulation for the development of forests and vegetation cover and combating desertification, based on the environmental system in 1441 AH; since the Kingdom's regulations are derived from Islamic Sharia, these regulations were established based on general Sharia principles.

The importance of this topic and the reasons for its selection lie in highlighting the role of Islamic legislation in forest development and the enhancement of vegetation cover preservation. Islam considers the environment and ecological balance as significant issues, encouraging environmental care and improvement. Therefore, this subject reflects the importance of Islamic legislation in achieving sustainable development and preserving forests and vegetation cover.

It also highlights the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in establishing regulations and laws that promote forest development and combat desertification. The regulation for the development of forests, vegetation cover, and combating desertification was adopted to organize agricultural activities and practices and maintain ecological balance, reflecting the Kingdom's commitment to enhancing the sustainability of natural resources and conserving biodiversity.

This scientific paper sheds light on the impact of the principle of Islah (reform or improvement) in enhancing interest in forest development, vegetation cover, and combating desertification. It highlights how regulatory bodies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia use these Sharia principles in drafting legislation, clarifying the relationship between Sharia and the Kingdom's legislation. Thus, the paper is titled: "The Principle of Islah (Consideration of Public Interest) and Its Impact on the Sustainability of Vegetation Cover the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor in the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence, Department of Sharia, College of Sharia and Fundamentals of Religion, Najran University, Najran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Email ID: [mamalasmari@nu.edu.sa](mailto:mamalasmari@nu.edu.sa) ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3016-3283>

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor in the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence, Department of Sharia, College of Sharia and Fundamentals of Religion, Najran University, Najran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Email: [aahakami@nu.edu.sa](mailto:aahakami@nu.edu.sa)

Upon reviewing previous studies, I found no jurisprudential study that focused on the cause of disagreement in this issue and encapsulated it in a single framework.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted using an inductive and analytical approach: Inductive Approach: I employed induction in gathering the scientific material, examining foundational texts to extract relevant information and appropriately categorize it. Analytical Approach: Analyzing the texts collected in relation to the issue and linking them to the theory, through which the researcher identified several findings.

### **Clarification of Research Terminologies**

Reclamation, or public interest, is one of the interests, signifying the opposite of corruption; it is said that something is rectified or corrected, meaning it becomes good and right, and it refers to success as well as benefit. (Ibn Manzur, 1995)

The concept of reclamation among the jurists means that the purpose behind enacting a ruling is either to bring a benefit, to ward off harm, or both. If it is known that the purpose of enacting a ruling is to achieve a benefit or to ward off harm, this can be aimed at worldly life or the hereafter. (Al-Amidi, 1982)

Some have defined it as a quality in a ruling that results in bringing benefit to people or warding off harm from them. (Al-Turki, 1990)

Interests are of four kinds: pleasures and their causes, and joys and their causes; harms are of four types: pains and their causes, and sorrows and their causes. Interests and harms are expressed as good and evil, benefit and harm, and virtues and vices; because all interests are beneficial goods and virtues, and all harms are harmful evils and vices. It is common in the Quran to use virtues to refer to interests, and vices to refer to harms. (Izz al-Din, 1991)

Reclamation is divided into three types based on whether Sharia considers them or not:

The first type: considered interests, which are known to be regarded by Sharia, are all interests whose ruling leading to them is established by a text or consensus.

The second type: dismissed interests, which are all interests known by Sharia not to be considered and are declared invalid and canceled due to their resulting harm, whether this harm is apparent or leads to future harm, or its harm is only understood through contemplation and thought.

The third type: speculative interests, which are interests about which Sharia has remained silent, neither endorsing nor dismissing them with a specific text. There is no evidence allowing their pursuit and establishing rulings based on them, nor is there evidence forbidding their pursuit and not establishing rulings based on them. Instead, they are left to the discretion of the authorities and jurists to be adopted if their condition warrants it and abandoned if they lead to harm. (Al-Zarkashi, 2013) This type is a matter of dispute among scholars with two main opinions:

The first: considers them binding, a view held by the majority of Hanafis (Al-Bahari, 1908) and some Shafi'is. (Al-Juwayni, 1997)

The second: considers them not binding, a view held by most jurists. (Al-Zarkashi, 2013)

The definition of vegetation cover includes natural plants, whether they are grasses, shrubs, or trees. As for the lands of vegetation cover: they include all state-owned lands that contain wild plants and the like, including pastures, forests, national and wilderness parks, geological areas, wetlands, plains, sandy areas (dunes), mountainous areas, valleys, coastal areas, and islands. (Environmental System: <https://2u.pw/6FI5iN>).

## **RESULTS**

Through the induction of the regulation related to vegetation cover and analyzing its provisions and their relation to the theory of reclamation, the researcher has identified the following results: Article 3 of the executive regulation for the development of vegetation cover and combating desertification, through paragraphs (22) to (24), mandates that the National Center for the Development of Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification is responsible for establishing controls and regulations for the exploitation of water resources and lands of vegetation cover, as well as conducting studies related to desertification, etc., with the aim of developing vegetation cover and combating desertification, sustaining the vitality and sustainability of the plant environment, and its preservation. All these are considered interests and legitimate benefits, thus, they fall under the scope of the reclamation rule.

Upon reviewing Article 5 of the regulation, paragraph (1), which states that the Center is tasked with carrying out duties and procedures related to the preservation of vegetation cover lands and combating desertification, including: taking appropriate measures to protect the vegetation cover from human activities and natural phenomena, etc., the purpose being to observe the public interest represented in the development of vegetation cover and warding off the harm of desertification. These benefits are considered, making this article fall within the meanings of the reclamation rule.

Article 6, according to paragraph (1), declares that the National Center is tasked with: preparing and implementing plans for forests and reserves, managing and developing them, aiming to preserve the vegetation cover environment and its sustainability. These goals and purposes are considered, and they fall under the reclamation rule.

Article 7, in paragraph (1), assigns the National Center the task of: developing a plan for regulating grazing within the national strategic plan, also specifying locations and times designated for grazing along with controls and requirements, all in consideration of the public interest that benefits the preservation of the ecological system and vegetation cover. Such authorization and action are deemed considerable as they are based on the contents of the reclamation rule.

Article 8, according to paragraphs (2) and (3), grants the National Center the authority to: propose suitable vegetation cover lands as national, wilderness, or geological parks, along with necessary designing, operation, and supervision, taking into account economic, environmental, and social interests and benefits. Initiating such arrangements derives its legitimacy from the principle of adopting the reclamation rule.

Article 9, as per paragraph (2), mandates the National Center with the task of inventorying, defining, and organizing investment-worthy vegetation cover development activities within that scope. This authorization revolves around caring for the public interest in developing vegetation cover and preserving the ecological system's nature, a considerable act built on the meanings of the reclamation rule.

Article 10, from paragraph (2) to (6), lists the general, technical, and procedural controls related to licenses and permits concerning vegetation cover lands in their various forms and appearances. These stipulations and controls revolve around considering the public good and the benefit that returns to preserving and developing vegetation cover. There is no evidence to authorize these controls and licenses - whether to consider or cancel - other than what can be included under the absolute interest that has no specific text but is based on observing the prevailing benefit, whether existing or anticipated, general or specific, as indicated by the contents of the reclamation rule.

Article 10, in paragraph (2), states that the National Center is tasked with providing necessary documents for cultivation licenses or afforestation, permits for land reclamation and leveling, and also requesting any other supports in this regard. This type of procedure related to licenses and permits - regarding their legitimacy - does not have a specific evidence for consideration or cancellation, but rather returns to the mere consideration of public interests that take into account the distinction of vegetation cover and the preservation of the ecological system, which is what the implication of the reclamation rule revolves around.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the research, there are several studies that discuss the relationship between Islamic principles and environmental sustainability, which can be linked to the initial inquiry about the influence of Islamic jurisprudence on regulations for preserving vegetation cover in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Environmental Sustainability in Islam:** A study published in MDPI highlights that environmental protection is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and was practiced by Prophet Muhammad, indicating that the principles guiding Saudi regulations regarding vegetation cover and combating desertification align with the broader Islamic perspective towards sustainability.

**Islamic Governance and Environmental Sustainability:** Another article explores how Islamic governance, which emphasizes principles compatible with sustainability values, can influence policy initiatives. This suggests that Saudi Arabia's approach to vegetation cover and desertification could be part of a broader Islamic governance framework inherently supporting environmental sustainability.

**Islamic Environmentalism:** The concept of Islamic environmentalism links Islamic ethics with environmental stewardship, indicating a foundation for environmental care within Islamic teachings. This directly supports the idea that the regulatory framework in Saudi Arabia for vegetation cover sustainability can be considered an application of Islamic environmental principles.

Comparing these results, it becomes clear that the principle of reclamation (*al-istislah*) and its concept have a significant impact on shaping environmental policies and regulations, reflecting the application of these Islamic principles in preserving vegetation cover, with the aim of maintaining the environment and enhancing public interest consideration. This alignment showcases a practical implementation of Islamic environmental ethics in national policies, affirming the contribution of religion in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

The discussion and comparison with related research highlight an intersection between Islamic jurisprudence and environmental sustainability efforts.

In light of the current research findings, the researcher concludes with several recommendations:

Enhancing awareness and education by encouraging educational programs and awareness campaigns about the importance of vegetation cover and combating desertification, with a focus on teaching Islamic values related to environmental sustainability and human responsibility towards the Earth.

Ensuring strict implementation of executive regulations to protect vegetation cover and combat desertification, with penalties imposed on activities harmful to the environment according to Sharia and legal standards.

Supporting research and studies aimed at finding innovative solutions for the development of vegetation cover and combating desertification, emphasizing the utilization of Islamic principles in developing these solutions.

Encouraging and supporting agricultural and environmental projects that rely on sustainable practices and contribute to the development of vegetation cover and environmental protection.

Working on integrating environmental policies with Islamic principles to ensure a balance between development and environmental protection, achieving environmental sustainability in accordance with public interests.

These recommendations aim to enhance efforts to protect vegetation cover and combat desertification within a framework compatible with Islamic Sharia and environmental sustainability, contributing to achieving sustainable development and protecting the environment for future generations.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The authors extend their thanks to the Deanship of Scientific Research at Najran University for funding this work under the grant code of the Najran Research Funding Program the code: (NU/NRP/SEHRC/12/26)

## **REFERENCES**

Ibn Manzur, Muhammad, 1994. *Lisan al-Arab (The Tongue of the Arabs)*, Beirut: Dar Sader.

- Al-Amidi, Ali, 1982. *Al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam* (The Perfection in the Foundations of Judgments), Damascus: Al-Maktab Al-Islami.
- Al-Turki, Abdullah, 1990. *Usul Madhhab al-Imam Ahmad* (The Principles of Imam Ahmad's School), Beirut: Al-Resalah Publishers, 1410 AH/1990 CE.
- Al-Zarkashi, Muhammad. (2013). *Tashnif al-Masami' Sharh Jam' al-Jawami'* (Enriching the Ears in Explaining the Collection of Collections). Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., Najmi, A. H., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). The effect of big data technologies usage on social competence. *PeerJ Computer Science*, 9, e1691.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). THE EFFECT OF E-TUTORIAL PROGRAMS ON IMPROVING THE PRODUCING DIGITAL CONTENT SKILL. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6581-6587.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). MANAGING DRILL AND PRACTICE PROGRAMS WITH A MOTIVATIONAL DESIGN AND THEIR EFFECTS ON IMPROVING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY COURSES. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6567-6574.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). THE IMPACT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE ACHIEVEMENT IN THE COURSE OF APPLICATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AMONG STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT NAJRAN UNIVERSITY. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6643-6648.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE EFFECT OF A SIMULATION PROGRAM ON STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION'S ACQUISITION OF HAND EMBROIDERY SKILLS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6575-6580.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). FLIPPED CLASSROOM: ENHANCING FASHION DESIGN SKILLS FOR HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6559-6566.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE IMPACT OF PROBLEM-SOLVING PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6636-6642.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). COLLABORATIVE E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: ENHANCING THE ATTITUDES OF OPTIMAL INVESTMENT DIPLOMA STUDENTS TOWARDS THE DIGITAL SKILLS COURSE. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6552-6558.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). THE IMPACT OF MOBILE LEARNING ON DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF INTEGRATED SCIENCE OPERATIONS AMONG STUDENTS OF THE OPTIMUM INVESTMENT DIPLOMA. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6629-6635.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING ADVANCED ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM TO ENHANCE THE ACCEPTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING DISASTERS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6603-6612.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE EFFICIENCY OF ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN FOSTERING ACADEMIC MOTIVATION. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6622-6628.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE EFFICIENCY OF INSTRUCTIONAL GAMING PROGRAMS IN STIMULATING CREATIVE THINKING. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6613-6621.
- Elfeky, A. I. M., & Elbyaly, M. Y. H. (2023). THE EFFECT OF SIMULATION PROGRAMS ON ENHANCING SKILLS OF DIGITAL APPLICATIONS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6588-6594.
- Elbyaly, M. Y. H., & Elfeky, A. I. M. (2023). THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMPLOYING MOTIVATIONAL DESIGNED E-LEARNING SITUATIONS ON DEVELOPING ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPUTER SCIENCE CURRICULA FOR OPTIMAL INVESTMENT STUDENTS. *European Chemical Bulletin*, 12, 6595-6602.
- Al-Buhari, Muhibbullah, 1908. *Muslim al-Thubut* (The Muslim of Provenance), Cairo: Al-Husseiniya Egyptian Press - Kurdistan Scientific Press.
- Al-Juwayni, Abdul Malik, 1997. *Al-Burhan fi Usul al-Fiqh* (The Proof in the Principles of Jurisprudence), Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah.
- Al-Zarkashi, Muhammad. (2013). *Al-Bahr al-Muhit* (The Encompassing Ocean). Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah.