

# ecoIslam

"...Uphold justice  
...even against your-  
selves or your parents  
and relatives. Whether  
they are rich or poor..."

(Qur'an 4:135)



Eco refugee twice over?

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"The creation of the heavens and the  
earth is a far greater matter than the  
creation of humankind. But most of  
humankind do not know it."  
(Qur'an 40:57)

## Struggle to save Indonesia's rain forests

**One of the most biodiverse rainforests in Sumatra, Indonesia is facing a new threat from a massive logging operation which could destroy the habitat of endangered Sumatran tigers, orang-utans and elephants.**

**A group of local and international NGOs, including WWF Indonesia, have raised the alarm after learning that one of the world's largest paper companies has obtained a license to clear the biggest area of natural forest remaining outside of the Bukit Tigapuluh National Park in Jambi Province, in central Sumatra. The island is already suffering from what is possibly the fastest deforestation rate in the world.**

A joint venture company of Asia Pulp & Paper and Sinar Mas Group (APP/SMG) was recently granted a license which could allow them to convert all of the province's natural forest outside of the national park, in one of the most important areas for biodiversity in Indonesia.

The threatened forest is home to around 100 of the 400 critically endangered Sumatran tigers remaining in the wild, and 100 Sumatran orang-utans who were part of the island's only successful reintroduction programme. The Sumatran elephants in the neighbouring national park are another endangered species who spend most of their time in the surrounding forests.

Despite the collective commitment of the Indonesian Ministries of Forestry, Environment, Public Works and the Interior, as well as the governors of all 10 Sumatran provinces (see p. 2), to protect areas of high conservation value in Sumatra, the rape of its rainforests continue. Bukit Tigapuluh, the natural forest slated for destruction by APP, is a prime example of the high conservation value areas that the governors have promised to protect.

Conservationists are concerned that APP could start logging early next year and are urging the Ministry of Forestry to protect the forest. >



# Global Issues

## Deforestation

...from cover page

APP/SMG and associated companies have already begun converting natural forest in other parts of Bukit Tigapuluh. In 2008, they completed a legally-questionable logging highway through this unique natural forest ecosystem to allow easier transport of wood to pulp mills in both Jambi and neighbouring Riau Province. The road has opened up access for rampant illegal logging.

Between 1985 and 2007, Sumatra lost 12 million hectares of natural forest; a 48 percent loss over 22 years. By 2007, the island had only 30 percent natural forest cover (around 13 million hectares), of which only 29 percent is protected as Bukit Tigapuluh National Park. The remainder is all too vulnerable to exploitation and destruction.

(For more information contact [bward@wwf.org.uk](mailto:bward@wwf.org.uk))



"We are ready to support the Jambi governor to implement his public commitment to protecting Sumatra's high conservation value areas ..."

Ian Kosasih, WWF Indonesia.

## The Sumatran Declaration on Biodiversity

Abridged version of speech by Vice-Governor Marlis Rahman of West Sumatra, Indonesia, at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, Barcelona, 10 October 2008

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu

I am representing my Governor colleagues across the island of Sumatra, one of the largest islands of Indonesia, as we announce this bold new commitment to save Sumatra's biodiversity. ... We, the ten Governors of Sumatra signed a commitment at a Governors' Summit in Jakarta on 18 September (2008), to reverse the trend from extraction to conservation. The three pillars of the commitment as we have signed are -

1. Establish ecosystem-based spatial planning
2. Restore critical areas to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services
3. Protect areas with high conservation values to enhance ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, and global climate change mitigation

This last pillar will truly have a global impact. More than 13 percent of Sumatra's remaining forests are peat forests. These forests sit on top of the world's deepest peat, which is a major store of carbon. When these forests are cleared, they release carbon emissions. By protecting these forests, Sumatra will make a significant contribution in the fight against climate change.

All ten Governors will begin work ... (on) plans ... (that) will take into consideration conservation of ecosystem goods and services such as watershed protection and carbon storage, and food security, as well as wildlife habitat protection and restoration.

(For full text of this speech please visit: [www.savesumatra.org/app/webroot/upload/pdf/Remarks%20by%20West%20Sumatra%20Vice%20Governor\\_Final.pdf](http://www.savesumatra.org/app/webroot/upload/pdf/Remarks%20by%20West%20Sumatra%20Vice%20Governor_Final.pdf))



"Tigers, struggling to survive as Jambi's forests shrink, have already killed nine people in the area this year."

Dolly Priatna, Zoological Society of London.



Indigenous tribe members. "Having lost their ancestral homes to 'progress', they are likely to end up in slums in urban centres."

AbdurRazaq Lubis, Mandailing All Clans Assembly Penang



# Editorial

## To Consume or Conserve

In this issue of ECOIslam we cover two stories that lie at the opposite extremities of the environmental spectrum. The front page carries news of a “massive logging operation” that will destroy huge tracts of pristine forest and much wildlife with it including orang-utan who are destined to be refugees twice over if this project succeeds. And, on page four we carry a story where a small group of people are attempting to conserve river and forest resources in the face of great odds. It is interesting that both these stories emerge from Indonesia, a location well endowed with “natural resources” which also happens to be the most populous Muslim country in the world. These two events illustrate the contradictory impulses of the human psyche - the one that manifests destructive tendencies on the one hand, and protective and conservationist on the other.

We create problems for ourselves when we see the natural world as a resource and not as an entity that we were created to be very much a part of. In fact we strayed much beyond the psychological separation of “man and nature” that took place during the “Enlightenment”, when economists began to look at the Earth’s ecosystems as a service industry and assigned monetary value to the benefits we ostensibly gain from either conserving or exploiting a river system or a rain forest. The most obvious example of this is the carbon market where we have contrived to give a monetary value to this excrement that our civilisation produces in exchange for creating more havoc to the Earth’s ecosystems.

Be that as it may, driven by our greed and hedonistic impulses we justify the destruction of huge swathes of the natural world in the name of progress. Still, we struggle with the altruistic side of ourselves, but the fact remains that the damage caused by our predator tendencies far outweighs the benefits derived from the opposite impulse. In a way it is like a small group of people racing with little buckets to fill a hole being dug by a giant mechanical digger. Given this scenario can we win the battle to save the planet from ourselves? The answer has to be in the negative, and is bound to remain so as long as we put profit before people and consumerism before conservation.



From this...

Mega companies savage vast tracts of rain forest and replant it with oil palm in the name of profit. The ecology of the region is destroyed, species - many of them still unknown to us made extinct and human populations who have adapted to living in forest areas for eons driven to be refugees and ending up most likely in urban areas as slum dwellers.

As we face a global crisis of our own making it hasn't dawned on most of us that unless we act with the required alacrity, this civilisation we have built with some unremitting passion will muddle its way through the final stages of its existence.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change has unequivocally confirmed for us what we have been feeling for years. Climate change is here to stay and will “continue for centuries”, thus increasing the probability that the curse of future generations will hang forever on this marauding civilisation of ours.

Muslims fit into this scenario like any other community on this planet - no more, no less. Mainly concerned with the routine and drudgery of life if not with survival they play their part in frittering away finite natural resources. It is interesting to note that the two Eids in the Islamic calendar are rapidly becoming consumer fests not far removed from what Christmas is to the West.

But, there is much in the Islamic system (see p5) that can show the way to a more considered approach to our relations with the natural world and it is not too late to begin to look at this and more importantly apply these principles in our daily lives and in our communities wherever possible. If little grains of sand make the pleasant land then we must count on the small actions of students in the Islamic boarding school near Bogor in Java and the villagers living adjacent to the Leuser rain forest in Aceh to make a difference. If following this dictum Muslims can multiply their contribution to this endeavour many times over we may still be able to make a difference for all who inhabit this planet.

**Fazlun Khalid**

Founder of Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences



...to this



# Conservation

## Islam and Conservation

### Indonesian Islamic School revives shariah conservation model

An Islamic boarding school near Bogor, Java is pioneering the establishment of the *harim* model of river conservation in Indonesia. The chairman of the Pondok Pesantren Modern Daarul 'Uluum, Ustadz Dr. H. Ahmad Yani explains, "This pilot program is a practical arena for students to get close to nature and start caring about the environment." Enabling students to respect and safeguard water resources in accordance with Islamic teachings is an innovative and practical way of raising environmental awareness in Indonesia.

In today's climate of uncontrolled extraction and destruction of the Earth's resources, preserving the environment is a priority that requires creative solutions, including the revival of traditional ways of conserving our natural surroundings. In order to preserve its surroundings, the Daarul 'Uluum is utilising the wisdom of Islamic traditions which provide a method for environmental management. This particular project addresses the stresses put on rivers and water systems by human habitations and uses the *harim* system that lays down a code of behavior for those living in or near threatened habitats. For example, creating a *harim* zone in a river system requires that half of the width of the river on each side of the river bank is designated as a pristine area where all human activity is prohibited. This untouched zone of natural habitat acts as a buffer, thus preventing the soil eroding into the river.



Qur'an school students clean up river (Photograph: Fachruddin Mangunjaya)



Teachers attending Islamic Conservation workshop.  
(Photograph: Fachruddin Mangunjaya)

The project was made possible by a small grant from the Rufford Foundation of UK and also the support of Conservation International Indonesia (CII). The idea behind this initiative was to conduct a pilot project to persuade the Islamic schools network to contribute to the conservation movement. This pilot was initiated by a workshop in May 2009, on Islamic Conservation Practice for teachers in the Daarul 'Uluum. The main resource persons were Iwan Wijayanto, the Partnership and Development Director of CII and Dr Ahmad Sudirman Abbas of the Faculty of Islamic Law, State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.

Iwan Wijayanto assured participants of CII's continued support for ventures of this nature, encouraging new ideas and practices that would ultimately conserve and protect ecosystems. It is hoped that this project, located near the Mount Gede Pangrango and Halimun- Salak National Parks near Bogor in Java, will help to showcase Islamic forms of conservation to the rest of the Indonesian nation.

#### Fachruddin Mangunjaya

(Co-author with Dr Ahmad Sudirman Abbas in Indonesian of *Khazanah Alam: Exploring Islamic Traditions of Conservation*)



# Natural Resources Management in Islam

## A gift to the planet

It is often said that Muslims have reduced their faith to ritual and do not pay much attention to their wider obligations. This is undoubtedly true when it comes to conservation issues and relating to the environment and it comes as a surprise to Muslims themselves to learn of the depth of this teaching in the *Shariah*.

Islamic law has its roots in the Qur'an and the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad known as the *Sunnah*. The Qur'an asserts that everything belongs to God: "He to whom the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs... He created everything and determined it most exactly." (Qur'an 25:2). The real owner of the natural world is the Creator and He has "showered His blessings upon you both outwardly and inwardly." (Qur'an 31:19). He appointed us as His "*Khalifs* (stewards) on the Earth ..... so He could test you regarding what He has given you." (Qur'an 6:167). This places us in the arena of a moral relationship with the rest of creation which demands both self-restraint as a control over greed and an awareness of the needs of others, which in its best manifestation is generosity. The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* formed the basis of the *Shariah* out of which Islamic law (*Fiqh*) evolved.

The *Sunnah* of the Prophet defined these injunctions of the Qur'an as follows:

- The elements that compose the natural world are common property
- The right to benefit from natural resources is a right held in common
- There shall be no damage or infliction of damage bearing in mind future users

As an extension of this foundational code Muslim legalists have over the centuries established the following principles. A person invalidates his rights over a particular natural resource if by exercising it he:

- Causes detriment to another
- Causes detriment to another without corresponding benefit to the other
- Causes general detriment to society

Additionally:

- Every member of society is entitled to benefit from a common resource to the extent of his need so long as he does not violate, infringe or obstruct the equal rights of other members of society
- Accountability rests with the user
- In return for benefits derived from a renewable resource the user is obliged to maintain its value
- If the user causes destruction, impairment or degradation he is held liable to the extent of putting right the damage caused

## Legislative principles

- (a) Allah is the sole owner of the earth and everything in it. People hold land on usufruct - that is for its utility value only. There is a restricted right to public property.
- (b) Abuse of rights are prohibited and penalised.
- (c) There are rights to the benefits derived from natural resources held in common.
- (d) Scarce resource utilization is controlled
- (e) The common welfare is protected.
- (f) Benefits are protected and detriments are either reduced or eliminated.

## Institutions

- (a) People who reclaim or revive land (*ihya'al mawat*) have a right to its ownership.
- (b) Land grants (*iqta'*) may be made by the state for reclamation and development.
- (c) Land may be leased (*ijara*) for its usufruct by the state for its reclamation and development.
- (d) Special reserves (*hima*) may be established by a community or the state for use as conservation zones.
- (e) The state may establish inviolable zones (*al-harim*) where use is prohibited or restricted. People have a right in the *Shariah* to create such zones managed by themselves and where use is severely restricted. Additionally, it is permitted to establish these zones adjacent to sources of water and other utilities like roads and places of public resort.
- (f) Makkah and Madinah are known as the Two Inviolable Sanctuaries (*al-haramain*) where trees cannot be cut down and animals are protected from harm within their boundaries. They served as examples of best practice.
- (g) Charitable endowments (*awqaf*) may be established with specific conservation objectives.

## Enforcement

The primary concern of Islamic governance is promoting the good and forbidding wrongdoing. As part of these functions it has the mandate to protect land and natural resources from being abused and misused. From its earliest years the Islamic state established an agency known as the *hisba* whose specific task it was to protect the people through promoting the establishment of good and forbidding wrongdoing. This agency was headed by a learned jurist (*muhtasib*) and he functioned like the chief inspector of weights and measures and chief public health officer rolled into one. He was also responsible among other similar duties for the proper functioning of the *hima* and *al-harim* zones and acted as a kind of environmental inspector.

The development and application of these principles and institutions have seen a decline over the past two centuries as another world view based on the exploitation of natural resources for profit gradually overtook this model. We are experiencing the consequences of this now. However, there are clear indications here as to how this Islamic heritage has been and could again be put to good use in the modern context.

## Fazlun Khalid

For more information on this subject see (a) Bagadeer A.A and others, IUCN Environmental Policy and Law Paper No.20, second revised edition. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK, 1994. (b) Llewellyn O., National Legal Strategies for Protected Areas Conservation and Management. Paper delivered at IVth World Congress on National Parks & Protected Areas, Caracas, Venezuela, 1992. (c) Dien M.I., The Environmental Dimensions of Islam. Lutterworth, Cambridge, England, 2000.



# Global Roundup

## News and Events

### Lebanese NGOs Halt Uncontrolled Hunting Of Birds

Hunting has been a national pastime for generations in Lebanon, with thousands of resident and migratory birds killed each year. Millions of European and Asian birds pass through what is one of the world's key migratory corridors, risking death in the name of sport. Bird hunting was first banned in 1994 in response to a request by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which was the implementing agency and the Global Environment Fund (GEF) the funding source for the first protected areas project in Lebanon. The ban was only intended to last for six years (the project implementation period), as a precursor to the establishment of new legislation to regulate and restrict bird hunting. However, disagreements between hunting organisations and gun and ammunition traders on the one hand, and conservation NGOs on the other, delayed the development of the law. Consequently, the ban was renewed on a yearly basis for ten years until the law was finally passed in February 2004.

However, the Hunting Higher Council (HHC), an adjudicating agency created by the law, was not set up until July 2006, and did not meet until invited by the incumbent minister in September 2008, whose intention was to ignore the procedural details of the law and lift the ban on hunting.

The conservation NGOs led by the Lebanese Environment Forum (LEF) and Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) fought this decision in the Hunting Higher Council. The conservationists organized a press conference at which they stressed the need to follow the procedures defined by the law. Additionally, the conservation NGOs called on the minister to resume the HHC meetings to speed up the proper implementation of the law and to provide strict enforcement of the hunting ban within the current period to preserve the rich biodiversity in Lebanon.

Regulations and restrictions on bird hunting are now finally in place thanks to the hard work and persistence of the Lebanese conservation NGOs who won the fight to protect birds from unregulated slaughter.

#### Bassima Khatib

Assistant Director General SPNL

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A victim of the lust for hunting

### Fresh Hope From The Philippines

Amidst all the doom and gloom some good news is emerging from the Philippines that Muslims are seeking inspiration from the Qur'an to protect their environment. According to a report in the Weekender, published on 27 February 2009, Muslim leaders in western Mindanao are initiating environmental conservation efforts through the "context of moral and ethical duties based on the holy scriptures of Qur'an".

This initiative should be a cause for celebration not only because people are beginning to realise the conservationist potential of the ethics of Islam but also because of the importance of the location from which this emerges. Zamboanga City in southern Philippines is located in an area which has experienced decades of conflict between the military and armed Muslim groups. The publication of the second edition of *Al Khalifa* (The Steward), compiled by the Islamic scholars (*Ulema*) of southern Philippines, has caught the attention of both the government and conservationists. The guidebook has now been endorsed by Darul Ifta, the association of Muslim scholars in the Philippines and has been pilot tested in some areas in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

The prevailing view amongst both government and non-government representatives appeared to be that the guidebook is the best tool to promote coastal resource management as 90 percent of the coastal inhabitants of the Peninsula are Muslims. The region has a 1,300 kilometre long coastline, almost the longest in the country. Sensible environmental governance is vital to protect the coastal areas as they serve as reserves for food stocks, with potential to provide a sustainable living for local people.

Stewardship is part of the teachings of the Qur'an. It is an obligation shouldered by all and the guidebook makes it clear to Muslims that they are forbidden to eat fish caught through illegal fishing practices which range from the use of explosives and poisons to the use of highly destructive fishing equipment. "These methods of fishing destroy the balance in nature and its harmony of aqua-life. It also deprives other fishers from sharing the natural bounty of the sea," said one official.

The Mindanao State University has already agreed with EcoGov, the Philippine Environmental Governance Project who are the sponsors behind the project, to integrate the *Al Khalifa* guidebook in their curriculum. It is expected that this resource will soon be taught in the university's eleven campuses across Mindanao.

Information contained in this article first appeared in a report entitled "Environmental guidebook abides by Muslim principles" in the WEEKENDER, 27 February 2009, published in Manila, Philippines under the by-line Darwin T Wee



# Global Roundup

## News and Events

### IFEES supports Prince Charles' campaign to protect rainforests

The Prince's Rainforests Project (PRP) was set up in 2007 by HRH The Prince of Wales to promote awareness of the urgent need to take action against tropical deforestation. The Prince of Wales has long been concerned about climate change and how destruction of the world's rainforests contributes to rising temperatures and sea levels. He says:

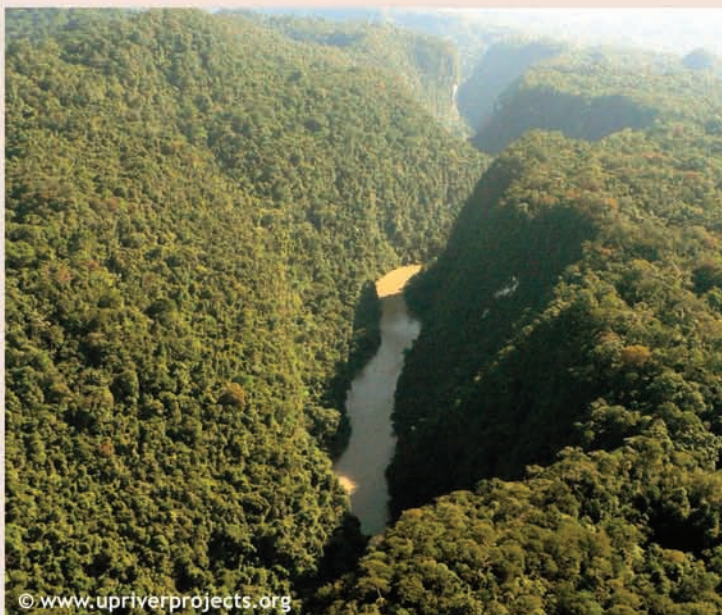
*"If deforestation can be stopped in its tracks, then we will be able to buy ourselves some much-needed time to build the low carbon economies on which our futures depend. I have endeavored to create a global public, private and NGO partnership to discover an innovative means of halting tropical deforestation. Success would literally transform the situation for our children and grandchildren and for every species on the planet."*

[From: [www.rainforestsos.org/pages/about-us/](http://www.rainforestsos.org/pages/about-us/)]

IFEES has no hesitation in supporting this initiative by The Prince of Wales, particularly in view of our concerns for what is happening in Indonesia (see pp. 1 to 3) and has sent his project the following message of support:

The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) which has a worldwide outreach is committed to galvanizing awareness of forest conservation issues amongst Muslims at both grassroots and official levels. IFEES specifically supports the PRP with its projects of tropical rainforest conservation of the Leuser Ecosystem in Aceh, Indonesia, in collaboration with the Aceh Government's Aceh Green Programme and tree planting operations. It hopes to extend this list in the future.

**The plants and the trees bow in adoration (to the Creator)**  
- Qur'an 55:6



© [www.upriverprojects.org](http://www.upriverprojects.org)

Leuser Rainforest, Aceh

### Green Muslims in Washington DC

American Muslims in Washington DC are trying to understand the wholeness within our faith, requiring us to be reflective about nature. The DC Green Muslims (DCGM) started with a 'green iftar', a group of 15 or so people celebrating the end of a fast during Ramadan, by breaking bread with an environmental twist. The first conversations centered on questions of intentionality and the intersection between Islam and the environment. We applied these to understand how we can lessen our carbon footprint and make our communities eco-friendly. The group interested in eco-conscious living grew, attracting more than 150 people over the next year.

While dinners were important for creating a networking space for a burgeoning green Muslim community, connecting with the rest of the DC community was a challenge. In collaboration with another nonprofit organization, Parks and People, DCGM planted trees and cleaned up a local park. Our intentions are to go further, trying to bridge the gap between the young working professionals of DCGM and local residents who face social and ecological injustice.

The members of DCGM came together because they valued striving to heal the relationship between the internal self and the external world. In addition, they wanted to work against social and ecological injustice, reflective of an inner spiritual imbalance.

Sarah Jawaid

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The White House, Washington DC



# Views and Reviews

## News and Events

### 199 Ways To Please God

By Rianne Ten Veen, Fast Print, 2009, ISBN 978184426629-6

First there was the Muslim Green Guide, and now we have a full-length guide to the Green Deen. Arranged according to traditional Islamic fiqh categories (Beliefs, Worship, Transactions, Moral character), this book contains Islamic guidance from the source texts, quotations and references from scientific and scholarly writings, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and examples of action for each section.

Rianne claims she is not a scholar but with two MA degrees and a diploma in Environmental Policy, she is certainly no ignoramus. She points out that 'environmental problems' are as man-made as poverty and wars, and therefore 'we can change the world, starting with ourselves'. She deals with many of the excuses that prevent us from doing what we should, and provides ample information to convince us to make a contribution. Small, regular and continuous actions by each of us can add up to a big impact on the planet. She suggests making a list of things you can do to change your life, and do one each month, like 'move to a more ethical bank, subscribe to a vegetable box, ... buy a bicycle, put a water saver in the cistern.'

This is a book you can dip into or read in its entirety. Keep it handy to remind yourself of positive actions and the Islamic, social and scientific reasons why you should do them. Each of us can spread the message by setting a good example in our daily lives.

Harfiyah Haleem



### 'Small actions with pure intentions are the best.'

#### The ups and downs of a British eco-Muslim group

Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment (ShINE) has had a turbulent ride since its conception approximately four years ago. Although it wasn't very active, the catchy name may have kept it alive in people's hearts. ShINE received much of its inspiration from IFEES and our supporters hoped to raise awareness within the wider Muslim community of environmental issues as they felt it was a somewhat neglected subject.

We began by organising events on a large scale but soon learnt that smaller events were easier to organise and had equal measures of success. We were in the doldrums for eighteen months and when ShINE re emerged we decided to be realistic and bring some like-minded people together regularly and eventually progress to bigger things.

Since it's 'relaunch', the attendees at ShINE meetings doubled in the space of three meetings. Its activities have resulted in the setting up of an e-group, and two very successful litter picks in conjunction with mosques. These events were organized by ShINE members Asad Habib and Nabeel Nasser and others, with support from Sheffield Streetforce.

As Muslims we take our inspiration from Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who said "Cleanliness is a part of faith". This aspect of Islam can also help foster greater integration between Muslims and non Muslims.

Kate Fryer

Sheffield Islamic Network for the Environment  
Contact: fryerkate@hotmail.com



Cleaning up Sheffield (Photograph: Asad Habib)

### Appreciation from Germany

This is an extract from an interview given by Dr. Sigrid Nøkel, a sociologist and German academic in an online article, "The Environmental Crisis is also a Spiritual Crisis", from Qantara (bridge), a German website dedicated to promoting dialogue with the Islamic world.

Nøkel: "One of the best-known organizations is the British Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, IFEES for short. It is a UNO registered NGO... Their initiatives in the UK, [Africa and Indonesia] have been very effective in helping build up an effective media image for an eco-Islam. They present an impressive synthesis of Islamic and environmental discourses in their professionally produced ECOIslam newsletter.

It provides a skilfully produced mix of articles covering the global issues as well as the everyday and practical. IFEES maintains links with regional British organisations that have started up in the last few years."

(For the full interview visit:  
[www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-478/\\_nr-899/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-899/i.html))

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