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Ramadan Earth Day Contest-

A MUSLIM AND A GOOD HUMAN BEING IN ONE

Whether it is the rustling leaves, whistling wind, crashing waves, chirping birds: nature will always surround us. However, how we take care of it depends on how it will last. Specifically, as Muslims, we should strive every day to take care of our environment. We should aspire to attain environmental justice. The denotation of environmental justice is the idea of fair treatment no matter what income you make, color, religion, or race you are and to enforce the practices of environmental laws and policies. Our environment affects us in more ways than we can imagine. In reality, we fail and fail every day to preserve our environment. We see the effects of air pollution, climate change, deforestation, species extinction, and more. Instead, we should be recycling, planting trees, throwing trash in their designated places, using less water, saving electricity, using less paper, using reusable items instead of plastic ones and the list can go on and on. Throughout the life of our Prophet Muhammed (saw) and the life of his companions and through the Quran, we see how important it is for us to take care of our environment as Allah(SWT) trusted us to do so as well as it is a test of what it means to be a good human being.

Taking care of the environment reflects on our general obligations as Muslims to be good stewards for humanity. It is our responsibility to take care of the earth and the environment. Allah created us as human beings and as human beings, we can think, so we're able to differentiate between right and wrong. Just as we know we should pray five times a day, we should know that we are accountable for taking care of the environment. In Surah Ar-Rum ayat

41, Allah tells us “Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of that which men’s hands have done.” This ayat was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed (saw) over 1,4000 years ago and is still relevant today. Allah (SWT) tells us that we are the reason why our environment is going to ruins. And Allah is the All-Knowing, imagine denying what Allah(SWT) tells us directly in the Quran. Allah(SWT) tests us on how we take care of our environment so we should make it our utmost duty. In surah Al-Anaam, ayat 165, “It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth ... that He may try you in what He has given you.” Taking care of the environment reflects on if we are good human beings. There are weather predictions that in 2050 there will be an increase in flooded cities, forced migration, and the Amazon rainforest will turn into the savannah. Taking care of the environment reflects on other aspects of social justice. For example, the environment can either encourage or discourage gatherings. Psychologically, humans are most likely to visit family members and friends when the weather is nice outside. Also, the environment affects a person's mood. In the winter, most people are gloomy and lazy. While in the summer, most people are happier and much more active and productive. Several research studies have proven that rooms with brighter lights, artificial or natural, help those who are depressed and have sleeping problems.

Moreover, poor environmental practices affect Muslims as we are told not to hurt ourselves or hurt those around us. We are told to take care of our bodies and taking care of our bodies also means taking care of our surroundings. In a hadith, a Bedouin man once asked the Prophet (saw), saying, “O Prophet of Allah (s.a.w), what supplication shall I make to Allah after I have finished doing the Salah? The Prophet (s.a.w) said,” Ask for good health”. Just as we should not destroy our good health, we should not destroy our environment. Our environment

reflects on our physical and mental health. We wouldn't want the generations to come to reside in a world where natural disasters are frequent and a wrecked environment. To add on, the Muslim community should make it a priority to fight for environmental justice as we are trusted by Allah (SWT) and who does not want Allah(SWT) to be pleased with them. As Muslims, we believe that natural resources are a blessing from Allah (SWT), however, we also know that on the Day of Judgment we will be asked how we used and protected these blessings. We also know on this day, the earth will be able to speak, the trees will be able to speak, the ground will be able to speak, our hands will be able to speak and all creations of Allah(SWT) will be able to speak. Signifying that if we act poorly, the creations of Allah will speak against us. It is our religious duty to take care of the environment and its resources. When we litter, cut down trees, waste electricity and water, and more, we are destroying the creations that Allah(SWT) gifted to us. Things are as simple as slowing down while driving can help preserve the environment. If we drive at least 50 miles per hour, we would already be using 25% less fuel than if we were driving at 70 miles per hour. And what would be even better is walking or biking instead of driving.

Over and above that, the Muslim community can fight for environmental justice by following the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammed(saw). The Prophet (saw) encouraged the planting of trees. Anas bin Malik (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him." (Bukhari). Planting trees is great for the environment, an ongoing good deed, healthier space for living as they contain a huge amount of oxygen for humans, improves mental health, controls natural disasters as trees absorb water and there are many more benefits for planting a tree. So go in your backyard or park with

friends and family and plant a tree and imagine how much reward you would be getting. Another way Muslims can keep the environment clean is by picking up any trash they see. Abu Zarr Al-Ghafari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (saw) said, “Removing harmful things from the road is an act of charity (*sadaqah*).” It does not take a second out of the 86,400 seconds in our day to do so. Allah(SWT) is so merciful that he rewards us for things that will only benefit and impact us. To boot, even when making wudu Muslims can take care of the environment as we should not wastewater. Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-`Aas (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet passed one day by Sa`d ibn Abi Waqas (May Allah be pleased with him) while he was performing *wudu*’ (ritual cleaning of body parts in preparation for prayer). The Prophet asked Sa`d, “Why is this wastage?” Sa`d replied, “Is there wastage in *wudu* also?” The Prophet said, “Yes, even if you are at a flowing river.” The Prophet (saw) is telling us even if we have all the resources we should use them wisely. And the same goes for food. In surah Al Araf, ayat 31, Allah says “O children of Adam! ... eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters.” We should follow the sunnah of the Prophet(saw) where we fill our stomach $\frac{1}{3}$ water, $\frac{1}{3}$ air, and $\frac{1}{3}$ food. Doing so will help us from wasting food and we will begin to see an increase in animals. In US households, around 150,000 tons of food is tossed out every day. Food that gets tossed away is left to rot and produces harmful gasses that are 25 times more harmful than carbon dioxide. We need to stop wasting food when there are people globally struggling to find where their next meal will come from.

So the next time you think about using that plastic water bottle, think again. It can take 450 years for a plastic bottle to decompose. So why not think smarter and buy yourself a reusable bottle. It'll be better for the environment and better for you and those to come after you. If we

want to start sustaining our earth, we need to think wiser and start sacrificing. Allah tells us multiple times in the Quran that we will be in charge of what happens to the Earth and we need to take responsibility. Allah trusted us with this job. We should use the life of the Prophet(saw) and find ways that we can adopt to help protect our environment. Let us show what it means to be Muslim and a good human being!

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