

## ISLAMIC ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE IN LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *The mega city of Lagos is increasingly bugged down by environmental challenges threatening the developmental agenda of successive regimes since the beginning of the 4th republic. With an estimated population of 21 million people, the environmental landscape is replete with the shattering of the basic elements of nature- land, air and water- which sustain life as a result of human indiscretion in the treatment of the environment. Such abuses constitute daily challenges being addressed by various environmental agencies in the State. Many of such governmental efforts bordering on the management of the physical consequences of environmental abuse have really not addressed the unethical human conducts which more often than not precipitate such avoidable environmental convulsions threatening sustainable development. Contrastingly, religious establishment also on their own focuses on moral protection of the environment thereby revealing a glaringly dichotomy between the approaches. This widening gap is the focus of this paper. Using exploratory and qualitative methods, this study interrogates the Islamic integrated approach as it relates with the roles of Islamic advocacy platform (Minbar) and tool (Khutbah) in the sustenance of the ecological balance ingrained into nature ab initio by Allah.*

المخلص : تتعرض مدينة لاغوس الضخمة للتنصت بشكل متزايد بسبب التحديات البيئية التي تهدد الأجندة التنموية للأنظمة المتعاقبة منذ بداية الجمهورية الرابعة. مع عدد سكان يقدر بنحو ١٢ مليون شخص، فإن المشهد البيئي مليء بتحطيم العناصر الأساسية للطبيعة

- الأرض والهواء والماء - التي تحافظ على الحياة نتيجة لمبالاة الإنسان في المحافظة على البيئة. تشكل مثل هذه الانتهاكات تحديات يتم التعامل معها من قبل مختلف الوكالات البيئية في الدولة. العديد من هذه الجهود الحكومية التي تقترب من إدارة العواقب المادية للإساءة البيئية لم تعالج في الواقع السلوكيات البشرية غير الأخلاقية التي في كثير من الأحيان تعجل مثل هذه الاضطرابات البيئية التي يمكن تجنبها والتي تهدد التنمية المستدامة. على العكس من ذلك، تركز المؤسسة الدينية أيضًا على تقديم الحماية الأخلاقية للبيئة وبالتالي تكشف الانقسام الصارخ بين هذين المنهجين. وهذه الفجوة أصبحت اهتمام هذه الرسالة. باستخدام الأساليب الاستكشافية والنوعية، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن المقاربة الإسلامية المتكاملة التي تتعلق بأدوار منصة الدعوة الإسلامية (منبر) وأداة (الخطبة) في الحفاظ على التوازن في حفظ البيئة المتأصل في الطبيعة من قبل الله.

**Abstrak:** *Kota mega Lagos semakin disadap oleh tantangan lingkungan yang mengancam agenda pembangunan rezim yang berurutan sejak awal republik ke-4. Dengan perkiraan populasi 21 juta orang, lanskap lingkungan penuh dengan hancurnya elemen dasar alam-tanah, udara dan air- yang menopang kehidupan sebagai akibat dari kecerobohan manusia dalam merawat lingkungan. Pelanggaran semacam itu merupakan tantangan sehari-hari yang ditangani oleh berbagai lembaga lingkungan di Negara Bagian. Banyak dari upaya pemerintah yang membatasi pengelolaan konsekuensi fisik dari penyalahgunaan lingkungan tidak benar-benar mengatasi perilaku manusia yang tidak etis yang lebih sering memicu gejolak lingkungan yang dapat dihindari yang mengancam pembangunan berkelanjutan. Sebaliknya, pendirian agama juga berfokus pada perlindungan moral terhadap lingkungan sehingga mengungkapkan dikotomi yang mencolok antara pendekatan-pendekatan tersebut. Kesenjangan yang semakin melebar inilah yang menjadi fokus tulisan ini. Dengan menggunakan metode eksploratif dan kualitatif, penelitian ini menginterogasi pendekatan Islam terintegrasi yang berkaitan dengan peran platform advokasi Islam (Minbar) dan alat (Khutbah) dalam kelangsungan keseimbangan ekologi yang tertanam dalam alam ab initio oleh Allah.*

**Keywords:** environmental abuse, islamic ethics, physical protection, moral protection.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The challenge of maintaining environmental equilibrium in the midst of human socio-economic activities has been the lot of governments in virtually all regions of the world. It assumes a very dire dimension in developing economies like Nigeria due to the absence of institutional framework to guarantee environmental sustainability as well as human indiscretion resulting in varying degrees of abuse. Government's inability to take environmental sustainability drive beyond churning out laws or regulatory frameworks to the level of provision of human and material infrastructures as well as adequate enforcement of environmental laws has accentuated environmental abuse in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos. With an estimated population of over 10 million people and a land mass of 3.577 sq. km, 22% or 787 sq.km of which consists of lagoon and creeks, Lagos State being the economic nerve center of Nigeria in spite of its smallness geographically presents a challenging environmental conundrum requiring holistic approach.<sup>1</sup> The Islamic ethical perspective which is the focus of this exploratory paper seeks to interrogate the different manifestations of environmental abuse in the state, their ethical consequences, and government's measures at addressing them as well as the Islamic integrated approach as a means of achieving an environmental sustainability in the state.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

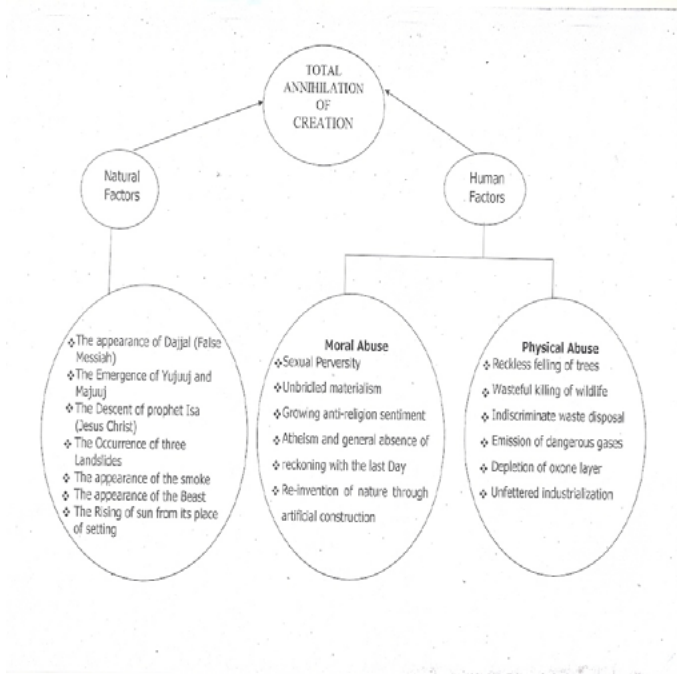
The consideration of environmental sustainability along human discretion is based on the world view of Islam about creation and the role of man in its preservation or annihilation. Islam postulates the imminent end of the world justifying the ephemerality of all existence in relation to the enduring nature of Allah<sup>2</sup> as represented by the permanence of the Hereafter. It is in the light of this that the Qur'an and Hadith not only chronicled the natural occurrences which would serve as harbinger heralding the end of the world but left the knowledge of the exact timing of their occurrences unknown to man. Though this hypothesis remains largely in the realm of dogma (known

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<sup>1</sup> "Lagos State Government Official Website," 2020, [www.lagosstate.gov.ng](http://www.lagosstate.gov.ng).

<sup>2</sup> QS. al-Rahman: 29-30: "Whatsoever is on it (earth) will perish and the face of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will abide forever".

as *ghaybiyyat*, in Islamic eschatological study), yet man’s continuous abuse and destruction of the environment which also is scripturally alluded to in Islam looks more apocalyptic than accidental giving semblance of the reality of this eschatological belief. While the moral abuse such as prostitution, unbridled materialism and the likes often gets the attention of religious authorities because of various scriptural evidences linking them with hastening the process of the imminent end of the world, the physical abuse which has to do with the reckless pollution of the land, air and water elements of the environment is seldom considered as a threat by them. It is in the same manner that government authorities put so much emphasis on the curbing of the physical abuse while doing nothing on the moral abuse.



This apparent dichotomy and lack of synergy between religious and government authorities in the fight against environment abuse which would be discussed later in this work is considered as a major reason for the continuous desecration of the environment in spite of the efforts of both the latter and the former. While substantial works have been done on “Islamic Environmentalism” in spite of being an emerging discipline, yet understanding the menace of environmental

abuse in a localized environment in an exploratory manner is almost non-existence. Apart from the edited works of Richard C. Foltz titled *Islam and Ecology-A Bestowed Trust*,<sup>3</sup> Takeshi Kimura which comes under the title *Religion, Science and Sustainability*,<sup>4</sup> and the survey of global Islamic environmentalism carried out under the auspices of Leiden Institute of Religious Studies (LIRS), Leiden University titled *Globalised Eco-Islam*,<sup>5</sup> the place of ethics in the consideration of environmental sustainability is largely a novelty in the study of the man and his environment. Abdul-Kabir Hussain Solihu's<sup>6</sup> "Making Sense of Natural Disasters: An Islamic Hermeneutics of Malevolent Phenomena in Nature and its Implication for Sustainable Development" in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* provided the impetus for this work. Another work which is very relevant to this thesis is I.L. Akintola's<sup>7</sup> work which within the limited scope of its objectives reiterates the Islamic position that all forces of nature are designed to render service to humanity and there are dire consequences on both in the event of any disruption of it. However, the ascription of all forms of environmental crises plaguing nature to man without sparing thought for natural disasters which are described as 'God's design for the regeneration of creation'<sup>8</sup> leaves much to be desired. It is the same lacuna provided by S. Popoola<sup>9</sup> whose PhD thesis is titled *Perceptions of Muslims on the*

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<sup>3</sup> Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, eds., *Islam and Ecology A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Takeshi Kimura, *Religion, Science and Sustainability* (Japan: Union Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> A. M Schwencke, *Globalised Eco-Islam (A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism)* (Leiden Institute for Religious Studies: Leiden Institute for Religious Studies, 2012), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul-Kabir Hussain Solihu, "Making Sense of Natural Disasters: An Islamic Hermeneutics of Malevolent Phenomena in Nature and Its Implication for Sustainable Development," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 24 (2007): 47-67.

<sup>7</sup> Ishaq Lakin Akintola, "A Study of the Islamic Doctrine of Eschatology" (Thesis, Nigeria, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> S. Nomanul Haq, "Islam and Ecology: Towards Retrieval and Reconstruction," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 121-54.

<sup>9</sup> Popoola Sulayman Akorede, "Perceptions of Muslims on the Preservation of the Environment in Lagos State, Nigeria" (Thesis, Nigeria, Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, 2010).

*Preservation of the Environment in Lagos State, Nigeria.* While the work provides insight into informed opinion, it is quite restrictive in scope to adequately address the various environmental challenges threatening the area of study.

## **ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSES IN LAGOS STATE**

Traversing the nooks and crannies of the state reveals a serious level of degradation and abuse of land, air and water resources – the trio considered as the basic elements of the environment. No one will pass through the state without perceiving these environmental infractions as described under the following sub-headings:

### **Indiscriminate Waste Disposal**

According to a report of the Lagos State Waste Management Authority, the company saddled with the responsibility of managing waste in the state, Lagos State generates 12,000 tons of garbage on a daily basis. Giving practical reality to this huge refuse challenge, an official of the agency says “... you know what 1,000 tons look like; 1,000 tons would fill 100 trailers”.<sup>10</sup> Invariably, the agency would require 1,200 trailer trucks to evacuate 12,000 wastes every day. This huge garbage generated is attributed to the cosmopolitan nature of the state with its attendant population explosion of over 22 million in a relatively small land mass which is said to be of the size of a population of four countries put together in West Africa.<sup>11</sup> Rapid population growth, coupled with unbridled urban pollution is among the many health and sanitation challenges facing the city. Apart from this, the unwholesome attitude of residents in dumping refuse indiscriminate also account for this menace. This attitude is accentuated by the inadequacies on the part of governments and their agencies responsible for environment which are aiding environmental abuse by the residents. Lack or inadequate conveniences on the highways cannot but encouraged public defecation and urination. As much as governments in the two states are upbeat in their campaign against environmental abuse, one wonders what they expect from the citizenry when public toilet facilities and refuse bins are either not

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<sup>10</sup> “Vanguard Newspaper,” 2020.

<sup>11</sup> “Vanguard Newspaper,” 2020.

provided at all or when provided are not evacuated appropriately. Though most of the public institutions visited during the course of this thesis have conveniences but their state of maintenance leaves much to be desired. Most markets have toilets but not all of them are well managed and maintained.

In getting around this challenge, it should be understood that for as long as human beings continue to strive towards fulfilling their primary and secondary needs, they would continue to generate wastes as unwanted and undesirable materials requiring proper and effective disposal. Government efforts through its different agencies in this direction no matter how upscale may not come to much if there is no attitudinal change from the residents who generate these wastes and put them forward for disposal. The attitudinal change being canvassed here is in respect of the following habits:

- i. **Throwing Garbage into the Streets and Water Ways:** This is a habit that perhaps accounts for the gory sight of refuse found on the roads, walk ways and gutters in every part of the two states. Wraps of sweets, water sachets, plastic bottles, paper wraps, leaves and similar objects are thrown into streets with reckless abandon by people. Some do it while walking alone or in concert with others while others perpetrate this act from moving vehicles. Although, at a time in our history, public vehicle operators were made to carry plastic refuse bins to collect wastes from their passengers,<sup>12</sup> however, the efficiency and effectiveness of it leaves much to be desired. Apart from the fact that quite many leave the refuse so collected undischarged for days thereby endangering the lives of their passengers, others who seem more circumspect superficially discharge (indiscriminately) but leave the bin untidy thereby making its sight offensive to the users. The impunity involved in the act of throwing garbage from a moving bus came to the fore by an incident witnessed while in the course of this work.<sup>13</sup> A lady threw a pet bottle of soft drink from the bus she was in and this elicited an angry reaction from another motorist who drove past the bus, blocked its way and insisted that the culprit

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<sup>12</sup> This was one of features of the Military administration in Lagos as it tackles waste management in the state until the birth of the fourth republic in 1999.

<sup>13</sup> This incident happened along Egbeda/Indium Road in the Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State on Saturday, 14th of March, 2021.

should come down and pick the bottle if the road is to clear for everyone to move on. Although, it took the culprit a while to come down and redeem her bad habit, the insistence of the motorist coupled with the public opprobrium over her conduct sent a signal to others to be watchful. This foregoing situation was arrested because there was someone watching and with the courage to insist that the right thing must be done. However, there are many of such instances happening perhaps every time and everywhere unnoticed and unchallenged. It is also important to state that traffic gridlock caused mainly by bad roads and sometimes by heavy vehicular movement at peak periods encourages hawking in between traffic.<sup>14</sup> Apart from the wastes thrown into the roads by motorist who patronize these hawkers, they also quite often leave the roads and sideways littered with empty cartoons and other unused items from their merchandise. There is also another category of people who have cultivated the habit of putting their refuse bags and nylons in the back of their cars and discharge them indiscriminately while no one is watching. It is also not a strange thing for others to discharge both domestic and solid wastes into the gutters and canals whenever it is raining.

- ii. **Street/Uncontrolled Trading:** This is another menace contributing to the abuse of land resources in the state. In spite of the fact that this act contravenes the Child Rights Act (CRA). In spite of the banning of street trading on its metropolis evoking relevant provisions in the enforcement by men of the Environmental and Other Special Offences Agency,<sup>15</sup> one does not need to move too far around to see that the menace is still going on unchallenged. Besides, the wastes generated are left on sidewalks with the high possibility and capacity of destroying the asphalt surface of the adjoining roads. Another dimension to this menace is the taken over of major bus-stops at nights by makeshift restaurants dispensing cooked food to ever available and willing

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<sup>14</sup> This is clearly evident in the smooth ride, clean surrounding and sidewalks of the newly constructed Ketu/Ikorodu Road with expanded corridors. Before this intervention, the road used to be filthy and littered with refuse generated by hawkers due to traffic gridlock occasioned by so many pot holes and bad spots on it.

<sup>15</sup> "PM Newspaper," 2015, [www.pmnewsnigeria.com](http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com).



customers thereby adding to already generated wastes.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the unhygienic conditions under which the meals are served, the immediate environment is usually littered with undesirable items as plastics, leftover food and the likes. Only areas covered by the sweepers employed by the government to sweep the streets on daily basis can heave a sigh of relief from the public nuisance which this new habit constitutes to the environment but for others not covered, they have to resort to self-help.<sup>17</sup> Uncontrolled trading is as a result of the endemic poverty in the society, virtually everyone has gotten involved in one form of trading or the other. Everybody is now a trader and every available space has now been converted to shopping mall. Planks are constructed over open gutters or drainage as foundations for shops thereby obstructing free flow of sewage water.<sup>18</sup>

### iii. **Improper Disposal of Refuse after Weekly/Monthly Sanitation**

**Exercise:** Another observable lapse in the management of refuse is the improper manner that wastes generated after the weekly environmental sanitation in all markets and general monthly exercise for all residents. One of the legacies of the past military administration in this part of the country is the monthly environmental sanitation which comes up on the last Saturday of the month. Until 24 November 2016 when the Lagos State government announced the stoppage of the exercise to give way for a more robust reform on environmental sanitation, on such days, human and vehicular movements are restricted between the hours of 7 and 10 in the morning to allow residents clean their homes and surroundings. In order to complement this, markets, stores

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<sup>16</sup> This practice is prevalent along the corridors of major roads in the urban part of Lagos State. Such areas include: Iyana-Ipaja, Egbeda, Ikotun, Iyana Isolo, Iyana-Ejigbo, AbuleEgba, Agbado/Ijaiye, Mushin and Lagos Island.

<sup>17</sup> Self-help in this instance refers to the insistence of some residents in the affected neighbourhood enforcing the clearing of waste generated and the sweeping of the surroundings by the vendors after work.

<sup>18</sup> Though government agencies like Lagos State Taskforce on Environment and Special Offences (Enforcement Unit) and the Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI) squad are daily battling with curtailing this menace by destroying the unauthorized trading outlets and shanties in different parts of the state, yet the attitude of the residents leave much to be desired. Quite often, one finds new structures springing up from the same spot because of the inability of the enforcement unit to maintain 24 hours surveillance on the area.

and shops are also to remain closed between the same hours every Thursday morning to enable the traders do their own cleaning and properly dispose their wastes. A cursory observation of this exercise over the years reveals that while government agencies in charge of managing waste are making serious efforts in carting away some of the wastes generated particularly by coopting tipper drivers and other private operators into the evacuation business, the habit of some of the residents leaves much to be desired. Quite often, many of them leave the wastes evacuated from the gutters and canals by the sideways ostensibly to allow them dry up before proper disposal but they soon forget or show lack of concern over time as they are either washed back into where they were taken away from by rain or becomes heaps of garbage after solidification by the heat of the sun.

- iv. **Indifferent Attitude of Public and Private Institutions to Environmental Sanitation:** Our observation of our environment show that most workers in both public and private institutions don't participate in environmental sanitation exercise because of the nature of their jobs. This is because their offices remain open on Thursday morning when markets and shops are shut for business for the cleaning exercise and their workers are usually at their various homes on the last Saturday of the month for the monthly environmental sanitation. So, the opportunity to engage in general cleaning of their surroundings does not really exist. Though, cleaners are employed to get offices and their immediate surroundings tidy, yet the task of maintaining a clean environment may be too cumbersome for them only to bear. Apart from the seats of governments of the state housing their secretariats, most of the public and private institutions like schools, local government secretariats, parastatals, agencies, banks and companies have their fences grown up with weeds and the adjoining water ways along their paths blocked in spite of the efforts of Environmental and Other Offences Taskforce (Enforcement Unit) to enforce compliance. This situation would not have been that bad if the institutions concerned had contracted people to clear the weeds or encourage the workers themselves to dedicate themselves to doing it.

v. **Unplanned Development:** The sub-urban and rural communities of Lagos which serve as safe haven for many leaving the congestion and the hustle and bustle of city lives are already manifesting symptoms of urban plan lessness being experienced in the latter. Perhaps, as a result of the hurriedness with which people move to these sites running away from the supposed oppression of city's landlords and the lack of presence of government agencies responsible for urban planning, residential houses are being constructed indiscriminately without making adequate provisions for future expansion of roads, walking paths, sewage and canals as well as recreational areas for relaxation and sports. One would have thought that with the experience of the congestion in the cities and its attendant health implications as well as the pains and losses citizens suffer when houses and properties are demolished to give way for expansion of infrastructural facilities as hindsight, developers of land resources in this developing areas would take adequate precautionary measures in planning the site. Besides, some of the houses springing up do not have conveniences and as such human and material wastes are dumped into the bushes and forests. Although, this may not be an environmental concern for now because the dump sites are usually located far away from residential areas but definitely it is a time bomb waiting to explode as more and more people move in.

These habits which are about attitudinal or behavioral pattern constitute greater challenge to waste management than other technical and financial resource issues. This is because, if those (residents) who generate the waste show more responsibility in terms of the proper manner of collection, sorting and disposal, the task of overall management by established agencies for it would be less burdensome and worrisome. The way to achieve this is through sensitization and moral persuasion which can only be done by those who have the moral authority over people- the religious scholars.

### **Reckless Sand Mining/ Excavation**

Sand mining is a direct cause of erosion in the State. Whether in Oko-filling along LASU-Iba road, Isheri Oke on the Lagos/Ibadan Expressway, Sapati, along the Itokin and Ijebu-Ode road via Imota,

all in Lagos State or at Ilepa and Ijako (Sugar) along Sango and Abeokuta road in the adjoining Ogun State, the spate of damage done to the topography, landscaping and aesthetic value of the land is left for every keen observer to behold. The incessant flooding, house submerging and mudslides being experienced in these areas is not unconnected with this mindless exploitation of land resources.

### **Sand Filling/ Land Reclamation**

This is the process of creating a new land from oceans, riverbeds, or lake beds. The land reclaimed is known as reclamation ground or land fill.<sup>19</sup> This practice is prevalent in the state because of its status as a coastal state. Lagos, apart from being an Island has over the years reclaimed lands through sand filling from the ocean which has provided its people with enough space for residential and business accommodation in places like Victoria Island, Ikoyi and the Lekki axis. The success recorded on this past effort, even though is colored by perennial flooding and threat from the ocean surge, has emboldened the state to seek for more land areas from the sea. The expanse of water between Obalende and Third Mainland Bridge which has on its right the popular Isale Eko, an area believed to be the aboriginal home of Lagos indigenes, is the current spot of land reclamation by the state government. This water logged community called Ilubirin, is inhabited by petty traders who traded in commodities that riverine dwellers are known for. Specifically, their men fished while the women supply fish to the major markets in Lagos. Like similar habitats scattered across Lagos, the area until recently was inhabited by migrants from Benin Republic, and Togo. There were also Ijaws, Ilajes and others of Badagry ethnic background.<sup>20</sup>

The water ways as well as the air space also suffer different forms of pollution in the hands of the residents of the State. In Lagos as in most other cities of the developing world, the quality of life is being diminished by uncontrolled and poorly managed solid waste being indiscriminately thrown into the marine environment. The quality of life in Lagos with respect of indiscriminate dumping of uncollected wastes generated on a daily basis beats one's imagination. Lagos State

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<sup>19</sup> "Wikipedia," 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Kumolu, "Land Reclamation: Safety Concerns in a Sand Filled Lagos," Vanguard Newspaper, 2014, [www.vanguardngr.com](http://www.vanguardngr.com).

perhaps more than any other state in the country is also challenged by air pollution because of its status as the industrial hub and economic nerve center of the nation. with almost 10 million population, 65% of the country's commercial activities housing more than 2,000 industries and having almost two third share of the over 5 million vehicles registered in the country for the past three years,<sup>21</sup> it's quite apparent that the state has different sources through which its air resources get contaminated. In fact, it is on record that of the 240,000 vehicles plying Lagos roads daily, very high percentage of them are not road worthy flaring carbon monoxide (one of the dangerous greenhouses gases) into the atmosphere.<sup>22</sup> Also accentuating the environmental problem is noise pollution. The blaring from record sellers, hooting from commercial bus operators, siren blaring from police and military escort vans and loud music from hawking vans, especially of local herbs sellers are some of the pollutants which have given Lagos the noisy city tag. Prostitution and Alcoholism-two vices-which contribute to the generation of waste around many hotels and liquor joints scattered around different spots of the State is also a contributing menace. This is because, once prostitutes or commercial sex workers are allowed to cluster around high ways in the night,<sup>23</sup> the possibility of other businesses springing up around them is high. Sale of pure water sachets, recharge cards, and their vendors as well as *kabukabu*<sup>24</sup> and other brisk business activities which have high risk of halting vehicular movement and generating unexpected waste become the likely consequence of such sex business.

## **ISLAMIC INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CURBING ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSES IN LAGOS**

In combating environmental abuse in a state like Lagos, one glaring observation is the inadequacies of the various government interventions through its regulatory agencies. This is quite obvious

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<sup>21</sup> "Thisday Newspaper," 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Obaseki, "Respiratory System, Lung Function and Exhaled Carbon Monoxide Among a Sample of Traffic Workers in Lagos Nigeria: A Pilot Survey," 2020.

<sup>23</sup> An online blog Gistmania Nigeria claimed that Lagos alone has 2,567 registered prostitutes (information accessed on Saturday 28th May, 2020)

<sup>24</sup> Kabukabu is the local name for unregistered and unpainted taxi cabs in Lagos and its environs.

in the fact that many of the abuses highlighted are still apparent in spite of enlightenment programmes and enforcement activities of the agencies. For instance, in spite of the ubiquitous presence of waste bins in public places, provision of waste trucks of different sizes plying the nooks and crannies to retrieve waste generated on regular basis and employment of sweepers to sweep the major highways and roads, the environmental sanitation still leaves much to be desired. The streets and roads are still littered with refuse and the gutters/water ways are still filled with all kinds of waste indiscriminately thrown or discharged into them by the residents. Most of the flooding recorded in different parts of the state is consequent upon water ways blockage as a result of human indiscretion in the treatment of the environment. In the same manner, the noise level in the state has not abated because of the activities of polluters despite the sealing off of worship centers and other outlets exceeding the 0.8 decibel for residential areas of the state. Just as the land is not spared the destructive tendencies of men, the air and water space is continuously abused through carbon monoxide and dangerous gases flared from unserviceable vehicles and home appliances as well as the discharge of solid waste into the sea respectively.

All these environmental violations persist in spite of government regulations and enforcement activities because most of the abuses are attitudinal driven. Government would therefore spend less on enforcement and save scarce resources for other development projects, if something is done to positively influence the attitude of the resident towards the environment. Unlike what is observed in many streets in the State where posters are pasted on walls with “Paste No Posters” boldly written or where people are seen openly urinating in public view at places with inscription “Do not Urinate Here”, enhancement of environmental aesthetic value, high sanitation, serene public space, clean air, free flowing of water passage and other environmental friendly effects would be the order of the day when human beings change their attitude towards the environment positively.

The reason why legislation has failed in uprooting social evils such as the abuse of the environment is because it lacks the vital prerequisite of reaching the dark abysses where crimes are nurtured. Legislation alone, however much fortified with threats of punishment, cannot stay the hand of the criminal. Its influence does not reach the

breeding ground of crime- the hidden soil of secret intentions. Most evils are perpetrated behind the smokescreen of imagined invisibility and unaccountability. However, advanced the techniques of detection may become, they can never shake the confidence of the sinner or criminal in his calculated hope of escaping detection because he plans and plots safely hidden from the sight of law, couched in the secret chambers of his heart.<sup>25</sup> It is only a sound belief in the existence, oneness and omnipotence of God and accountability,<sup>26</sup> which can frustrate and defeat all sins and crimes in the offing.

These twin principles (Faith and Accountability) which form the underlying objective of Islamic eschatological belief (*al-Akhirah*) are complemented with other principles such as *khilafah* which reminds man of his responsibility as a careful and kind God's representative on earth towards other creatures, *al-'Adl* which emphasizes divine orderliness and justice requiring human respect for the environment and *al-Ihsān* which places responsibility on him to treat everything in creation with kindness as a kindhearted vicegerent of his Creator-Allah. All these principles, according to Ziauddin Sardar<sup>27</sup> presents Islam as having the "most sophisticated framework for an environmental ethic that one can possibly desire" and point to no other direction but encouraging man to be fair to himself, his fellow men and everything in creation, both animate and inanimate and warn him of dire consequences on all in the event of any breach by him.

In the light of the above therefore, Islam would be able to provide the much-needed impetus to assist the current global effort in protecting the environment from further abuse while clearing the mess already generated, when all these principles from revelatory messages and prophetic precepts are annexed to infer in effective ethical (theological) frameworks upon which environmental laws would be based. The various environmental challenges of the State in the areas of waste disposal and management, environmental sanitation, noise pollution, flooding and coastal erosion would be effectively tackled through the implementation of such laws. This is

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<sup>25</sup> Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* (London United Kingdom: Islam International Publications Limited, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Ahmad, 209.

<sup>27</sup> Adnan Z. Amin, "Preface to Islam and Ecology," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

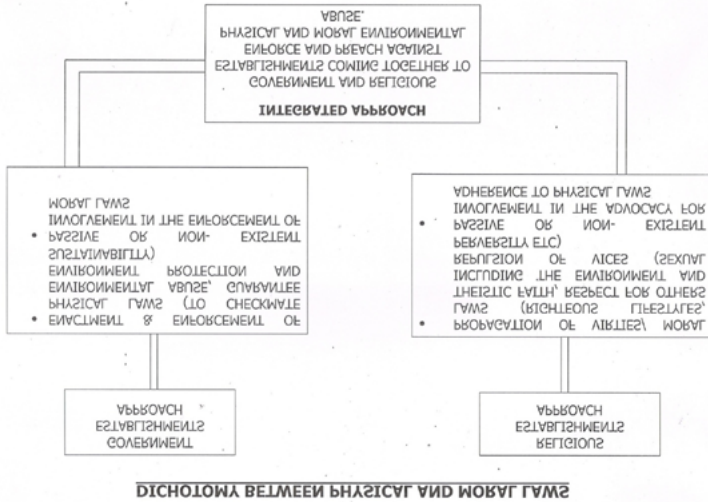
quite important considering the efforts at global and national levels at integrating religions and their scholars and practitioners into the movement for environmental protection. Besides, the involvement of Muslim NGOs such as Islamic Relief<sup>28</sup> which could be replicated at the local level in Nigeria, in the campaign makes it another compelling imperative.

Muslim involvement therefore in providing moral compass for the protection of the environment through attitudinal change of the citizenry should start from the religious personnel who often serve as spiritual guide on matters affecting their followers. These personnel are Imams (leaders) in ritual prayers and officiating Imams at their socio-religious ceremonies where lectures and sermons are delivered as tools of indoctrination. The *minbar* (pulpit) and *khutbah* (sermon) of the Imam is therefore the most important command platform and command tool respectively for sermonizing, informing, educating, instructing and indoctrinating the Muslims. To effectively achieve this, the *khutbah* must be contemporaneous and issues focused. This is because environmental abuse has both physical and ethical (moral) implications which both government and religious authorities must address in order to achieve meaningful results. The dichotomy between physical and morals which makes both authorities to overtly concentrate on individual areas of competence (i.e. government authorities tackling only physical abuse and religious authorities dealing only with moral abuse) is the reason for the Islamic Integrated Approach being recommended here as depicted by the following diagram:

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<sup>28</sup> Islamic Relief is a UK based Muslim humanitarian organization involved in bringing succor to victims of wars and natural disasters.





In using *khutbah* to curb environmental abuse through attitudinal change in Muslims; religious scholars must equip themselves with current and relevant information on the subject matter. Ministries of Environment in the the State and other government agencies such as Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA),<sup>29</sup> Lagos Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA),<sup>30</sup> Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASAA)<sup>31</sup> and similar outfits

<sup>29</sup> Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) is established to develop and implement sustainable waste management strategies targeted at improving public health standard. LAWMA was first named Lagos State Refuse Disposal Board in 1977 before it was changed to Lagos State Waste Disposal Board (LSWDB) in 1981. It took its new nomenclature in 1991 under Edit No. 55 which made the agency to be responsible for the collection and disposal of municipal and industrial waste, as well as for the provision of commercial waste services to the state and Local Government services. (Information obtained from LAWMA official website, “www.Lawma.org.ng,” 2020.)

<sup>30</sup> The mission of Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) is to safeguard environmental quality that is consistent with social and economic needs of the State, so as to protect health, welfare, property and quality of life. The agency is one of the parastatals under the Lagos State Ministry of Environment. (Information obtained from the official website, “www.Lasepa.org.ng,” 2020.)

<sup>31</sup> The Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency as established by the Lagos State Structures for Signage and Advertisement Agency Law 2006 and the Amendment thereto is responsible for regulating and controlling outdoor advertising and signage displays in Lagos State. (Information obtained from the official website of LASAA, “www.Lasaa.com,” 2020.)

must synergize with League of Imams and Alfas in the State to develop its members capacity to understand various environmental problems plaguing the world generally as well as local environmental concerns. Having understood the issues clearly, it would then be easy for them to develop appropriate scriptural interpretations in order to effectively indoctrinate their congregations. Such interaction should be made regular so that threatening issues like global warming, depletion of ozone layer and desertification as well as the human habits which have not only created but continued to exacerbate them are brought to the attention of those who have the training and capacity to address the minds and spirits of both actual and potential polluters. Apart from the deployment of *khutbah*, the involvement of Muslim scholars in tree planting and other environmental sanitation activities would encourage their followers to adopt environmental friendly habits while shunning the abuses.

From the above, it is clear that there is much more that religion and its practitioners can offer both society and government than currently being tapped. Perhaps, it is as a result of this fact that Lagos State at a time involved religious scholars in the advocacy for payment of tax in order to increase its internally generated revenue in the State. It is also on record that some religious scholars were engaged by the two Federal Agencies responsible for election and road safety matters to increase the awareness of the citizenry on their core mandates.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This work has presented our observations on the different forms of the environmental abuse from our field trips to nooks and crannies of Lagos State. The exploration reveals varying degrees of misuse of the resources of the elements of land, air and water in the State. The ethical implications of these environmental nuisances which opened up discussion on the observable dichotomy in government and religious authority's divergent responses to physical and moral

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<sup>32</sup> The Lagos State government involved the Chief Missionary of Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria and other Christian Missionaries in the media campaign to get Lagosians to pay tax. Similar efforts were made by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Federal Road Safety Corp (FRSC) in involving Chief Missionary of NASFAT in Voter and Road Safety education.

abuses are also highlighted. Islamic integrated approach which seeks to criminalize all forms of environmental abuses as sinful through the use of *Minbar* and *Khutbah* as commanding platform and tool is provided as a panacea to encourage environmental friendly habits amongst residents of the State in order to combat environmental abuse and halt the drift towards the annihilation of existence.

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