

BANGLADESH: MUSLIM WILDLIFE STATEMENT

Allah has made known through the Qur'an and via the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) in the Hadith that He is the creator of all life on Earth and indeed in the Universe (Sura 4:171; 21:19). We also know from the Qur'an that Allah has placed humanity in the role of Khalifa - Vice Regent on Earth (Sura 2:30; 6:165). We know that on the Day of Judgement we will have to answer before Allah as to how well we conducted ourselves as Khalifas for life on Earth (Sura 6:73).

When we look with eyes of faith at the wonders of all that God has created: at the strength of the tiger, the swirling patterns of the birds of the air and the fish in the waters. When we see the colours and smell the sweet scents flowers of the field we should rejoice that God has placed us in the midst of such a glorious world. Therefore, when we see this glory diminished by our sin, greed and foolishness, we should be horrified and speak out against this wanton destruction of the wonder that God has created. We should both repent and seek to do all in our power to protect all that God has created and placed within our care.

As Allah says in the Quran, **"Behold! In the creation of the heaven and the Earth, in the alteration of the night and the day...through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an Earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the Earth...here indeed are signs for a people that are wise."** [2:164]

This verse demonstrates the Muslim view that wildlife is created by Allah and is vital to our life on Earth. This verse affirms that wildlife makes our lives richer, contributes to our wellbeing, and is critical in keeping the environmental balance that is necessary for our survival.

We know also from the Qur'an that all creatures live in community, as do we. As Allah says, **"There is not an animal on earth, nor a bird that flies on its wings, but they are communities like you..."** [6:38]

We know also from the Hadith that the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) stopped people tormenting a mother bird by taking her young that Allah forbids the infliction of unnecessary pain and suffering on other living creatures. As Khalifas we have the right to use nature but not to abuse it. As it says:

"We were on a journey with the Apostle of God, and he left us for a while. During his absence, we saw a bird called Hummara with its two young and took the young ones. The mother bird was circling above us in the air, beating its wings in grief, when the Prophet came back and said: "Who has hurt the *feelings* of this bird by taking its young? Return them to her." (Narrated by Abdul Rahman bin Abdullah bin Mas'ud. Muslim. Also Awn [Ref. No. 32] Hadith No. 2658. Also "Guillaume" [Ref. No. 57]; p. 106

All animals – those that live in the water, fly in the sky or walk on Earth - praise Allah in their own way. All life is subject to the plan and will of Allah and as such, man must not destroy the balance of life so finely crafted by our Holy Prophet. As it says, **"....So, do not transgress the**

due balance....” Let us remember that mankind benefits from animals as a mercy from Him, and we should express our thanks to Him by protecting wildlife and ensuring that no creature disappears from this Earth.

According to the spirit and overall teachings of Islam, causing mental and physical pain and suffering to the creatures of Allah is not justifiable under any circumstances. The teachings inspire Muslims to protect animals and treat them with respect. These include:

- Muslims must take great care while killing an animal.
- Animals must be well treated before being killed.
- Animals must not see other animals being killed.
- The knife must not be sharpened in the animal's presence.
- The animal must not be in an uncomfortable position.
- The animal must be allowed to bleed out.
- Muslims declare Allahu Akbar, Allah is the Greatest, during the slaughter of an animal.

The Hadith asks us also to protect the animal’s habitat. Even pesticides should be used carefully as they are hazardous for the soil and plants. Hunting for sport is also forbidden in Islam.

Animals in the service of man should be used only when necessary and their comfort should not be neglected. While traveling, the Holy Prophet gives the following advice:

“When you journey through a verdant land, {go slow to} let your camels graze. When you pass through an arid area, quicken your pace {lest hunger should enfeeble the animals}. Do not pitch your tents for the night on the beaten tracks, for they are the pathways of nocturnal creatures.” (Narrated by Abu Huraira. Sahih Muslim - Kitab-ul-Imam [Ref. No. 53]; Vol. III; Chapter DCCVII; Hadith No. 4724; pp. 1062, 1063)

In the light shed by the Qur’an and by the Hadith we call upon all the Umma of the faithful to remember that on the Dreadful Day of Judgement, we must answer for any wasteful use of creation, any destruction of a part of nature that was not necessary.

We therefore ask all the faithful to protect those animals in our lands that are most threatened, such as tigers, elephant, turtles, birds, snakes and turtles, and to assist in the prevention of poaching and the illegal wildlife trade in order that on the Dreadful Day of Judgement, when the community of creatures stand before Allah, we will not be condemned by their words.

The richness of this world is a gift and a blessing from Allah. May we in turn be a blessing to all that Allah has made and given to our care.

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