

***An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'*, by  
Farhana Mayer:  
A Response by Professor Ibrahim Özdemir  
Uskudar University**

*Remarks Given at Online Book Launch, hosted by the Laudato Si' Research Institute and the UN Environment  
Programme Faith for Earth Initiative, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to join you from Boston to share my thoughts on a genuinely path-breaking and transformative book: *An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'* by the brilliant author Farhana Mayer.

Last week, the world witnessed unprecedented devastating and horrific floods in Libya and an earthquake in Morocco. These events demand immediate attention, sympathy, and action, reminding us that climate change is a present-day crisis affecting us all, regardless of our location or socio-economic status. Therefore, we must work together as a global community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition to clean and renewable energy sources, and support vulnerable communities adapting to the new climate reality. Remember that our common humanity transcends borders, and our collective responsibility is to safeguard the planet and its inhabitants.

I am a member of the team that proposed the *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change* in response to Pope Francis's call in May 2015. This declaration emphasized the moral and ethical imperatives of caring for the environment and protecting the Earth's natural resources, drawing upon Islamic teachings highlighting stewardship over the Earth. The *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change* underscores that climate change is a matter of justice, equity, and social responsibility.

Today, I am a core team member of *al-Mizān: A Covenant for the Earth*, a pioneering initiative that seeks to present an Islamic perspective on the environment. It is finalized and ready to be publicized soon. Our commitment to reinforce actions to combat climate change and other pressing threats to our planet drives this effort.

In an increasingly interconnected world facing environmental challenges, we must tap into the profound wisdom and ethical principles inherent in Islamic teachings to guide our actions. *al-Mizān* represents a profound effort to offer an Islamic outlook on the environment, underpinned by the belief that these teachings hold invaluable guidance for environmental sustainability. Our objective is to strengthen the resolve of individuals, communities, and nations to take concrete steps in the fight against climate change. We firmly believe that *al-Mizān* can be a powerful tool *to raise awareness, inspire action, and promote responsible stewardship of the Earth* among people of all backgrounds. Therefore, *al-Mizān: A Covenant for the Earth* invites us to reconsider our relationship with the environment from an Islamic perspective. It emphasizes themes of environmental responsibility, conservation, and social justice within Islamic teachings. The document underscores that protecting the environment is not just an ethical imperative but also a moral duty.

Today, I am glad that sensitive scholars and scientists received the message of the *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change* and that *al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* produced fresh insights and innovative approaches to address the challenges threatening our planet's well-being. Ms. Farhana Mayer's book is a beacon of wisdom that guides us towards a harmonious coexistence with nature through the spiritual teachings of the Qur'an and their striking resonances with Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Mayer's work is groundbreaking in many ways.

First and foremost, it bridges two worlds, two spiritual traditions — Islam and Christianity — and highlights their shared commitment to environmental stewardship, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility across religious divides. What truly sets *An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'* apart is its depth of research and scholarship. Mayer delves into the rich tapestry of the Qur'an, meticulously unraveling its ecological messages and paralleling them with the teachings of *Laudato Si'*.

Moreover, this book is a much-needed resource for scholars and practitioners. Mayer's accessible language and clear explanations make complex theological and ecological concepts understandable to a broad audience. It invites readers to reflect thoughtfully, fostering a deeper connection to their faith and greater responsibility towards our planet. Therefore, Farhana Mayer's work offers hope and guidance in a world where environmental challenges seem insurmountable.

At the heart of this remarkable work is the convergence of two distinct yet profoundly interconnected spiritual traditions — Islam and Christianity. Mayer's book challenges us to recognize that the call for ecological responsibility is not confined to any single faith tradition. Instead, it is universal, collective, and imperative. It serves as a profound reminder that, regardless of our religious or cultural backgrounds, we are all inhabitants of the same fragile planet entrusted with caring for its delicate ecosystems.

Farhana Mayer's book is also remarkable for its message and the depth of research and scholarship that underpins it. In an age where information is abundant but wisdom is scarce, Mayer's work is a testament to the value of rigorous intellectual inquiry. She meticulously explores the Qur'an, shedding light on its ecological messages with a precision and clarity that is both illuminating and inspiring. Through painstaking analysis, she unveils a profound constructive collaboration between the Qur'an and *Laudato Si'*, demonstrating how these texts resonate in their advocacy for environmental care, social justice, and the intrinsic dignity of all living beings.

This scholarly approach is essential because it invites us to go beyond surface-level understanding and engage in meaningful dialogue. Mayer's book equips us with the tools to engage in profound discussions with people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. It fosters a sense of unity and shared responsibility, transcending religious divides and encouraging us to embark on a collective journey toward a more sustainable future. One of the most commendable aspects of the book is its accessibility.

Reading Mayer's book, you can readily discover that the text is eloquent and approachable, making complex theological and ecological concepts accessible to many readers. She guides us through intricate ideas with grace and simplicity, making the profound wisdom contained within these texts relatable and applicable to our daily lives. This accessibility is vital because it ensures that the message

of environmental responsibility reaches a broader audience, including those who may not be familiar with the religious texts in question.

The book does more than merely present ideas; it invites readers to contemplate deeply on the book of the universe and our souls: as the Qur'an teaches us, "*We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them*" (41:53). Indeed, it goes further and encourages us to examine our beliefs, values, and actions in the light of the ecological teachings in the Qur'an. This self-reflection is a crucial step in the journey toward becoming responsible and conscientious stewards of our planet. It challenges us to reevaluate our consumption patterns, our treatment of the natural world, and our relationships with fellow human beings.

Moreover, Farhana Mayer's book offers practical guidance for those who wish to translate these insights into action. We must also recognize the book's timeliness. The urgency of addressing these challenges cannot be overstated in a world beset by environmental crises, from climate change and deforestation to biodiversity loss and pollution. Mayer's book emerges as a timely and relevant response to these crises, offering a way forward rooted in faith, ethics, and a deep reverence for the natural world.

One of this book's most profound aspects is how it celebrates the sanctity of all life. It reminds us that every creature, from the smallest microorganisms to the grandest ecosystems, has been created and sustained by God. Therefore, each has intrinsic value and deserves our respect, care, and protection. This message is particularly poignant in an age where rampant exploitation of nature has led to the endangerment and extinction of countless species.

In conclusion, *An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'* is a path-breaking book that has the potential to reshape our collective consciousness and inspire transformative change. It is a testament to the power of faith, wisdom, and unity in the face of environmental challenges. Mayer's meticulous scholarship, accessible writing style, and profound insights make this book a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and anyone who cares about the fate of our planet. As we navigate the complex and interconnected challenges of our time, let us heed the call of this extraordinary work.

Let us embrace our shared responsibility as stewards of the Earth and work together, across faith traditions and borders, to create a more sustainable and compassionate world. Once more, I want to underline that *An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'* invites us to embark on this journey of transformation and renewal. The book lights the way toward a future where humanity lives in harmony with nature, fulfilling our sacred duty to protect and preserve the planet for future generations.

I wholeheartedly welcome this book to the growing body of Islamic environmental literature and believe it will be pivotal in promoting ecological awareness and sustainability within the Muslim community and beyond.

Thank you.