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CLIMATE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND FUTURE GENERATIONS: AN ECOTHEOLOGY FOR INDONESIA'S UMMAH OF 'NONIDENTITY'

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Religious Institutions as Global Sustainability Champions: Istiqlal Mosque's Green Mosque Program and the Sustainable Development Goals

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REJECTING GEOTHERMAL PROJECTS:

MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTALISM
IN THE SAPAR MOVEMENT FOR ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE
AND SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

Muizudin

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Religious Institutions as Global Sustainability Champions: Istiqlal Mosque's Green Mosque Program and the Sustainable Development Goals

Abstract: This study examines the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta—Indonesia's national mosque and the first mosque in the world to receive EDGE green building certification in 2022—as an example of how a religious institution can engage with global sustainability agendas. While the mosque's technical improvements in energy and water efficiency contributed to its recognition, this study focuses on how Istiqlal integrates environmental responsibility into its religious authority, institutional practices, and community outreach. By analyzing the mosque's programs on resource management, environmental education, and public engagement, the study shows how Istiqlal contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, and 13) in ways grounded in Islamic ethical principles such as stewardship, balance (mīzān), and the avoidance of harm. The article argues that Istiqlal demonstrates how a domestic religious institution can interpret, translate, and localize global sustainability norms in ways that are culturally grounded and institutionally actionable. In doing so, the study contributes to broader debates on the role of religious actors in global governance and the institutionalization of Islamic environmental ethics in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Istiqlal Mosque, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Net Zero Emission, Global Governance, Energy Efficiency.

Abstrak: Studi ini menganalisis Masjid Istiqlal di Jakarta, masjid nasional Indonesia yang meraih sertifikasi bangunan hijau EDGE pada tahun 2022, sebagai model partisipasi institusi keagamaan dalam agenda keberlanjutan global. Selain peningkatan teknis dalam efisiensi energi dan air, fokus kajian ini adalah bagaimana Istiqlal mengintegrasikan tanggung jawab lingkungan ke dalam otoritas agama, praktik institusional, dan jangkauan komunitasnya. Kami menganalisis program pengelolaan sumber daya, edukasi lingkungan, dan keterlibatan publik yang dijalankan masjid. Istiqlal berkontribusi pada Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (TPB 6, 7, 11, 12, dan 13) melalui cara-cara yang berakar pada etika Islam, seperti prinsip kepengurusan (stewardship), keseimbangan (mīzān), dan pencegahan kemudaratan. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa Istiqlal menunjukkan bagaimana institusi keagamaan domestik dapat menafsirkan dan melokalkan norma keberlanjutan global melalui pendekatan yang berakar kultural dan dapat dioperasionalkan secara institusional. Melalui kasus ini, studi ini berkontribusi pada perdebatan yang lebih luas mengenai peran aktor keagamaan dalam tata kelola global dan pelembagaan etika lingkungan Islam di Asia Tenggara kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Masjid Istiqlal, Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (TPB), Net Zero Emission, Tata Kelola Global, Efisiensi Energi.

ملخص: تبحث هذه الدراسة في مساهمة مسجد الاستقلال في إندونيسيا في أهداف التنمية المستدامة، لا سيما في الجوانب البيئية والطاقة. وباعتباره جهة فاعلة غير حكومية، يشارك مسجد الاستقلال بنشاط في معالجة أزمة المناخ من خلال مبادرة المسجد الأخضر. ومن خلال اعتماد إطار مفاهيمي للحوكمة العالمية، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أهمية التعاون العابر للحدود في معالجة قضايا أزمة المناخ. كما يستكشف العلاقة بين الطاقة والأمن البيئي ضمن الإطار الأوسع لأهداف التنمية المستدامة. تشير النتائج إلى أن مسجد الاستقلال يلعب دورًا في حوكمة المناخ، لا سيما في مسألة الحد من الانبعاثات الصفرية الصافية التي تتماشى مع الأهداف الوطنية والعالمية. ويساهم برنامج المسجد الأخضر أيضًا في تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة ٢، ٧، ١١، ١٢، ١٢، لا سيما في التأكيد على تطبيق البناء الأخضر في إدارة الطاقة، بالإضافة إلى تعزيز الوعي البيئي من خلال نشر الدعوة وتنفيذ البرامج الخضراء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مسجد الاستقلال، أهداف التنمية المستدامة، أهداف التنمية المستدامة، أهداف التنمية المستدامة، صافي الانبعاثات الصفرية، الحوكمة العالمية، كفاءة الطاقة.

In 2022, the Istiqlal Mosque—located in Central Jakarta and recognized as the national mosque of Indonesia—became the first mosque in the world to receive the Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE) certification. This placed Istiqlal at the forefront of Islamic environmental initiatives globally and demonstrated its capacity to adopt internationally recognized sustainability standards. As the largest mosque in Southeast Asia, and a key site for religious, educational, social, and humanitarian life, Istiqlal's transformation provides a critical vantage point for understanding how a major Islamic institution interprets, operationalizes, and localizes international sustainability agendas—and how other religious institutions can follow suit.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out a comprehensive agenda for addressing interconnected global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and peace (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020). Religious institutions have become increasingly recognized as important non-state actors in advancing these goals due to their moral authority, social reach, and ability to shape collective norms and behavioral change (Azubuike et al. n.d.; Fahed and Daou 2021). Mosques serve as focal points for religious education and community mobilization, positioning them as potentially powerful contributors to sustainability transitions when environmental values are integrated into institutional governance.

Across the Muslim world, this engagement has taken shape through the rise of "Green Mosque" initiatives—programs that promote energy efficiency, water conservation, and responsible resource management in mosque design and operations. Although often framed in terms of design and technological sophistication, the Green Mosque model also builds upon fundamental Islamic ethical principles of stewardship (khilāfah), balance (mīzān), and the prohibition against environmental harm (fasād) (Abdul, Manzoor, and Shabir 2024; Asshdiqi and Rif 2024; Ilham Muchtar and Billah 2022). Early landmark projects such as the Khalifa Al Tajer Mosque in Dubai demonstrated the feasibility of integrating renewable energy into worship spaces (Brittlebank 2014), while Morocco's program to retrofit 600 mosques by 2019 highlighted the role of state-led religious environmental governance (Neslen 2016). Initiatives like Ummah for Earth have further reframed mosques as platforms for environmental literacy, solar adoption, and grassroots

climate action across the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Greenpeace Indonesia 2021).

Mosques play a similarly prominent role in Indonesia, serving as vital institutions of social and cultural life. Istiqlal occupies an especially prominent position as both a national religious symbol and a statelinked institution. Its certification as a Green Mosque following major renovations in 2019 and 2020 represented more than technological enhancement (though it was also impressive in this regard, with its LED lighting, solar installations, and greywater recycling systems). It also signaled a shift toward sustainability-oriented governance, environmental education, and faith-based ecological engagement. These developments suggest that Istiqlal is now moving beyond architectural retrofitting to embrace a broader role in advancing environmental governance through religious authority.

Despite Istiqlal's growing visibility, academic literature has largely focused on technical and architectural renovations. Existing studies emphasize specific features of the renovated Mosque, such as its passive cooling techniques, renewable technologies, and measures to improve energy and water efficiency (see, for example, Kusumastuti et al. 2025; Nugroho Sunartio et al. 2024; Ridfinanda and Puspitasari 2024; Satriabhawana 2024). While these works consider an important dimension of the Mosque's transformation, they still treat sustainability primarily as a design challenge rather than an institutional practice. As a result, there is a paucity of literature that seeks to understand how Islamic environmental ethics are embedded into governance routines, operational policies, and religious communication—an issue that becomes more pressing as global Islamic environmental discourse, including *Al-Mīzān: A Covenant for the Earth*, urges mosques to function as agents of ecological ethics and community transformation.

While existing scholarship has documented the architectural and technological innovations introduced at Istiqlal, far less attention has been paid to how Islamic environmental ethics and global sustainability frameworks become institutionalized within mosque governance. This gap limits scholarly understanding of how mosques function as religious non-state actors that interpret, translate, and authorize sustainability norms within their organizational structures and religious communication. By foregrounding the institutional, doctrinal, and communicative mechanisms through which Istiqlal

embeds sustainability principles into governance routines and publicfacing religious practice, this article advances ongoing debates on faithbased environmental governance and the role of Islamic institutions in global environmental norm-making.

This study adopts a qualitative institutional analysis that draws on policy texts, mosque management documents, ministerial regulations, and official digital communications. The authors analyzed the materials using content analysis, focusing on how sustainability is framed, operationalized, and legitimated through religious authority. Following Creswell (2018) and deMarrais et al. (2024), the analysis involved iterative coding to identify patterns across three domains: institutional governance, religious messaging, and community engagement. This approach broadens our understanding of Istiqlal as being not only a site of architectural importance and technological achievement, but also an institution that interprets and translates global sustainability norms into organizational practice.

The discussion proceeds as follows. The next section situates this study within evolving scholarship on Islamic environmental ethics and the governance of religious institutions, establishing the foundation for conceptualizing mosques as sustainability actors. The paper then presents a qualitative case study of Istiqlal's institutional transformation, drawing from secondary data across multiple sources. The article then examines Istiqlal's practical contributions to SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, and 13, highlighting both its successes and the governance challenges it continues to navigate. The conclusion reflects on the broader implications of this case for understanding how Islamic institutions localize global sustainability frameworks in ways that are contextually grounded, publicly influential, and institutionally enduring.

Islamic Environmental Ethics

Contemporary Islamic discussions about the environment have grown out of a rich ethical tradition that connects cosmology, morality, and ecological responsibility. Rather than presenting sustainability as a foreign or modern concern, scholars point to foundational Qur'anic and Prophetic concepts—such as *khalīfah* (stewardship), *mīzān* (cosmic balance), the avoidance of *fasād* (corruption), and the cultivation of *iṣlāḥ* (restoration)—as the basis for a moral relationship between humans and the natural world (Abdul, Manzoor, and Shabir 2024;

Asshdiqi and Rif 2024; Ilham Muchtar and Billah 2022). These ethical principles shift the relationship between humans and the environment from one defined by ownership or power to one of accountability and care. Earlier scholarship approached these principles normatively, interpreting Qur'anic verses and Hadith as moral guidelines for individual conduct. Over time, the conversation expanded to consider the obligations owed by the collective. Gade (2023) highlights those Islamic teachings that cultivate environmental sensibilities embedded in everyday practices and institutional priorities, while Nasr (1996) argues that ecological destruction reflects a civilizational shift away from sacred understandings of the cosmos, where nature is no longer recognized as a sign (*āyah*) of divine order. Özdemir (2003) similarly emphasizes that the Qur'an presents nature as a moral interlocutor that commands respect, humility, and restraint.

Legal scholars have added another dimension to this ethical terrain by linking environmental responsibility to *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*. Safeguarding life, promoting welfare, ensuring intergenerational justice, and protecting the public interest anchor environmental care within jurisprudential reasoning (Gade 2025). Framing sustainability as part of the higher objectives of Islamic law signals that ecological stewardship is not merely encouraged—instead, it is an integral component of preserving human well-being. As noted above, these various contributions converge in contemporary declarations such as *Al-Mīzān*: A Covenant for the Earth, which brings together Qur'anic principles and global sustainability discourse. Although implemented unevenly, *Al-Mīzān* provides a shared vocabulary that links spirituality, morality, and planetary responsibility. Across these developments, Islamic environmental ethics emerges as a multidimensional tradition—spiritual, normative, metaphysical, and juridical—offering a coherent foundation for institutional engagement.

Faith-Based Environmental Governance

While Islamic environmental ethics establishes why ecological responsibility is meaningful in a religious sense, a different strand of scholarship focuses on how religious institutions operationalize these commitments. Here, attention shifts from moral principles to the institutional processes through which sustainability becomes embedded in administrative systems, leadership structures, and community outreach.

Studies of mosque governance in diverse contexts show that environmental programs depend not only on design but also on decision-making authority, organizational capacity, and managerial continuity (Gray 2023; Omar et al. 2018; Yu et al. 2025). Leadership vision, institutional autonomy, and the ability to coordinate resources effectively influence whether ecological practices are sustained beyond the initial phase. This research shows that these efforts become most meaningful when they are integrated into routine institutional practices—maintenance, budgeting, procurement, program planning, and religious education—rather than remaining limited to intermittent technical upgrades.

Research on the role of religious organizations in development further underscores their capacity to shape public norms and mobilize constituencies. Faith-based organizations can frame environmental issues through ethical and theological narratives that resonate strongly with local communities (UNDP 2020; Fahed and Daou 2021). Religious authority, in this sense, functions as both a moral resource and an organizational asset. When environmental responsibility is incorporated into sermons, curricula, volunteer activities, and social programs, it becomes part of an institution's identity, and the related practices become routine and taken for granted.

While the institutions' moral authority and familiarity with local communities' particularities are strengths in the context of sustainability, there also exist challenges. Religious institutions commonly face gaps in monitoring, limited technical expertise, or inconsistent leadership commitment (Koehrsen 2025). As noted above, to be effective, faithbased environmental governance requires not only moral leadership but also organizational competence—administrative professionalism, resource planning, and the ability to adapt environmental practices into long-term institutional routines. There is a great degree of variance between institutions when it comes to resourcing, capacity, and capability—something that will need to be overcome if the goal of environmental stewardship is to be fully realized in practice. However, it is a worthwhile endeavor, not least because—as the foregoing discussion has demonstrated—mosques are not simply places of worship but are (or have the potential to become) influential organizational actors capable of channeling religious ethics into structured forms of environmental governance.

Religious Institutions and Sustainability Norms

Religious institutions have become increasingly visible actors in global and national sustainability agendas, particularly as environmental governance frameworks have shifted toward multi-stakeholder participation, norm diffusion, and voluntary compliance. Studies of global governance emphasize that states alone cannot meet the sustainable development goals; success will require the engagement of diverse non-state actors to help translate global norms into social practice (Weiss and Wilkinson 2014; Bernstein 2021). In this context, faith-based actors are increasingly recognized as significant contributors to environmental and social transformation because of their moral authority, organizational infrastructure, and ability to mobilize large constituencies (Pal and Tok 2019; Koehrsen 2025).

Empirical research on sustainable development consistently demonstrates that religious organizations are well-positioned to advance global norms at the community level. The UNDP (2020) notes that religious leaders and institutions can amplify SDG messaging, increase public trust in sustainability initiatives, and reinforce behavioral change. Fahed and Daou (2021) similarly argue that faith-based organizations play a crucial role in embedding SDG principles into local contexts by integrating them into education, outreach, and institutional governance. In many Muslim-majority societies, mosques function as social anchors capable of disseminating environmental values through sermons, study circles, and community programs, making them strategic vehicles for norm localization (Asshdiqi and Rif 2024).

At the national level, religious engagement with sustainability often interacts with state policies, regulatory frameworks, and national commitments under international agreements. In Indonesia, for example, the integration of climate and sustainability policy into legal instruments—including Law No. 16/2016 ratifying the Paris Agreement and Presidential Regulation No. 98/2021 on carbon governance—creates institutional openings for religious entities to adopt green building standards and renewable energy practices. Research on the diffusion of environmental norms in Southeast Asia shows that religious institutions frequently align with state or international initiatives when these norms can be framed in ways compatible with religious ethics (Delbeke et al. 2019; Yu et al. 2025). This is especially evident in sectors such as green architecture, energy transition, and sustainable water management.

Mosques occupy an important role here, acting as institutional bridges connecting the global sustainability movement with local religious communities. They are able to translate international environmental norms into Islamic concepts and language—thus linking global ideas to values such as *khalīfah*, *mīzān*, and the avoidance of *fasād*—which enhances the legitimacy of sustainability initiatives and facilitates public uptake (Omar et al. 2018; Abdul, Manzoor, and Shabir 2024). Through this intersection of global governance, national regulation, and religious authority, sustainability becomes embedded not only in the mosque's physical infrastructure but also in the moral and institutional fabric of religious life.

We have located our study of Istiqlal in the context of these emerging discussions on faith-based environmental governance in order to show how Islamic institutions operationalize global sustainability norms not only through doctrine but also through managerial authority, regulatory alignment, and public-facing religious communication. In the following section, we take a closer look at the specific institutional practices that have been implemented at Istiqlal which reflect and operationalize these ethical and governance principles.

Governing Sustainability through Indonesia's National Mosque

Istiqlal reopened in January 2021 as Indonesia's flagship Green Mosque, having undergone a major renovation that ran from May 2019 to July 2020 and faced delays caused by Covid-19 and large-scale social restrictions (Kementerian PUPR 2020). The renovation did not merely restore an ageing building constructed in 1961; it effectively transformed Istiqlal into a sustainability champion by enhancing the original architecture's energy-efficient features and adding new technologies. Istiglal now features smart lighting, a solar panel system, water treatment for ablution, sustainable building materials, and an energy-efficient air circulation system (Kementerian PUPR 2020). The introduction of these measures means that not only does Istiglal function as a religious institution, but it is also a concrete embodiment of Indonesia's commitment to environmental stewardship and contribution to global climate governance. As we shortly demonstrate, this transformation is closely linked to Indonesia's position within international environmental regimes.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, establishes the international legal framework for responding to the climate crisis, while the 2015 Paris Agreement, a treaty under the UNFCCC and explicitly framed in relation to the SDGs, seeks to limit global temperature rise and strengthen the global response to climate change (Delbeke et al. 2019). Although the Paris Agreement is legally binding, implementation relies on voluntary cooperation through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including the promotion of SDGs among ratifying countries (Delbeke et al. 2019). The SDGs themselves offer a normative framework for sustainable development: 17 goals with 169 targets, including ones relating to climate action, water, energy, and responsible consumption (United Nations n.d.). They operate primarily as soft law—encouraging voluntary participation rather than mandating compliance—by drawing upon shared values, goals, and standards that foster international consensus on sustainable development (Pal and Tok 2019). As such, even though the SDGs are not hard international law, they have nevertheless become a significant component of global governance (United Nations n.d.).

Indonesia voluntarily adheres to these frameworks (Pal and Tok 2019), and it ratified the Paris Agreement through Law No. 16 of 2016 on the Ratification of the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC (Undang-Undang Nomor 16 2016). The law frames climate control as a constitutional mandate: the state is responsible for guiding development to align with environmental and social considerations for the welfare of the population. Climate change is thus firmly placed on the national agenda. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Indonesia is required to submit an NDC outlining strategies to reduce carbon emissions, which in turn shapes sectoral policies, including those targeting the built environment (Undang-Undang Nomor 16 2016). Green buildings are one of the instruments through which Indonesia seeks to demonstrate its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Presidential Regulation No. 98 of 2021 regulates the Implementation of Carbon Economic Value for Achieving NDC Targets and Controlling Greenhouse Gas Emissions within National Development and is linked to the broader target of net zero emissions (NZE) (Peraturan Presiden 2023). Within this framework, the energy sector, including buildingrelated energy use, is explicitly addressed in Article 7 (Peraturan Presiden 2023).

To support these commitments, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR) has developed a set of green building regulations. Regulation of the Minister of PUPR No. 21 of 2021 on Green Building Performance Assessment sets targets of at least 25% energy savings and 10% water savings in buildings; this aligns with Government Regulation No. 16 of 2021 on the Implementation of Law No. 28 of 2002 concerning Green Buildings (Kementerian PUPR 2021). These legislative instruments build on earlier laws, such as the Regulation of the Minister of PUPR No. 2 of 2015, which emphasized that sustainable development requires building practices that integrate technical, economic, social, and environmental aspects, including the conservation of energy, water, and other resources (Kementerian PUPR 2015). Regulation No. 21 of 2021 further clarifies that renewable energy can be utilized in public facility buildings, including mosques (Kementerian PUPR 2021). Through these instruments, religious buildings become viable sites for implementing national climate policy and green building standards.

In parallel, the concept of global governance provides a useful lens for understanding how these international and national frameworks intersect with religious institutions. Global governance refers to collective efforts to identify, understand, and address challenges that exceed the capacity of individual states, encompassing informal and formal values, rules, norms, procedures, practices, policies, and organizations that together foster a degree of global order, stability, and predictability (Weiss and Wilkinson 2014). These governance arrangements range from informal guidelines and temporary coalitions to binding treaties and formal organizations, and bring together states, intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, private sector actors, and civil society more broadly (Weiss and Wilkinson 2014), more recently expanding to include non-state actors such as religious institutions (Pal and Tok 2019). Given their strong community foundations and persuasive moral authority, mosques are well-positioned to help integrate global norms and advocate for the adoption of international frameworks such as the SDGs, particularly as global arenas increasingly welcome non-state participation in sustainable development (Pal and Tok 2019).

The governance of the Istiqlal Mosque illustrates this convergence of global norms, national regulation, and religious authority. The Green

Mosque program is formally embedded in Indonesia's institutional architecture through Presidential Regulation No. 46 of 2023, which amends Presidential Regulation No. 64 of 2019 on the Management of the Istiqlal Mosque (Peraturan Presiden 2023). Under this arrangement, the Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture chairs the Istiqlal Governing Board, whose members include the Minister of State Secretary, the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing, the Governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta, and the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) (Peraturan Presiden 2023). In this way, Istiqlal is situated at the intersection of international environmental regimes, state regulations, and religious institutions, and becomes a key site through which faith-based environmental governance practices are articulated in Indonesia.

Within this institutional framework, the mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also as a center for integrating sustainable values into religious life through preaching, social activities, and the management of environmentally-friendly facilities. The mosque is a local moral authority, translating global norms, such as the SDGs, into practices firmly grounded in Islamic values and articulated in a way that resonates with the community (Asshdiqi and Rif 2024). This localization process can be seen in the integration of SDG-related goals into Istiqlal's physical design as well as in its programming.

In terms of its physical construction, the mosque is built on green architecture principles, a design approach that seeks to minimize adverse impacts on humans and the environment (Abu Alazm and El-khalidi 2018). At Istiqlal, green architecture is operationalized through the efficient use of water and energy, the decision to incorporate recycled building materials, and the configuration of interior and exterior space, amongst other things.

Water management is a central component of this approach and directly links the mosque to SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. The Istiqlal Mosque employs reverse osmosis technology to process used ablution water into potable water by removing contaminants. Used ablution water is channeled through separate pipes into a dedicated tank and filtered through a three-layer system before reuse. Replacing ablution faucets and sinks with more water-efficient models and installing dual-flush toilets further support the goal of conserving water. The faucets on the ablution sinks are designed to dispense only the

amount of water required by users, and sinks with automatic sensors ensure that water flows only when hands are detected under the tap, reducing waste. Dual-flush toilets and urinals allow users to choose the appropriate water volume, significantly reducing consumption compared to conventional systems. As a result, Istiqlal recorded a water efficiency rate of 35.99%, equivalent to 99,672.40m³ per year (Kusuma 2022). These measures align with SDG targets 6.3 and 6.4 on improving water quality, expanding safe reuse practices, and increasing water-use efficiency, and, on a local scale, support target 6.1 by providing access to safe drinking water (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020; Kusuma 2022).

Energy management at Istiqlal similarly incorporates SDG 7 relating to affordable and clean energy. The mosque has a smart lighting system with modern, efficient, and energy-saving technologies. The system allows up to 20 lights to be managed simultaneously through a single IP address, enabling integrated lighting control. Natural light and ventilation are incorporated into the design, while 13% of the mosque's electrical energy is generated from the solar panels installed on its roof (Kementerian PUPR 2022). These measures led to a 23.07% reduction in energy consumption (equivalent to 534.47 MWh annually), and a reduction in carbon emissions of 1,588.17 tons per year (Ridfinanda and Puspitasari 2024; Kementerian PUPR 2022). Implementation of smart lighting and solar energy directly supports SDG target 7.3 on improving energy efficiency and target 7.2 on increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020).

Material selection and use further connect the mosque to SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production. During the renovation, Istiqlal deliberately reused materials from the original construction where possible. The exterior is painted white to enhance temperature regulation, while the marble flooring's cool surface provides comfort and adds aesthetic value inside the mosque. Natural stone and stainless steel are reused in the columns, supporting environmental sustainability by relying on durable materials with low maintenance requirements (Ridfinanda and Puspitasari 2024). These practices support SDG target 12.5 on waste reduction through reuse and recycling, and target 12.2 on efficient resource use, while the mosque's adoption of green renovation practices reflects SDG target 12.6, which encourages organizations to integrate sustainable production and consumption patterns (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020).

Spatial design and ventilation reflect the same priorities. The mosque's interior—the main worship area—is designed to maximize crossventilation (air flowing across the space via strategically placed windows and doors), and is supported by an energy-efficient cooling system. The mosque also employs a hollow façade design that wraps around the building's front, side, and rear, facilitating natural air circulation. Vegetation, including large trees in the outer area and hanging plants along the corridors, contributes to micro-climate regulation around the mosque (Satriabhawana 2024). By reducing reliance on mechanical cooling systems, this spatial arrangement strengthens the contribution to SDG target 7.3 on energy efficiency and further demonstrates sustainable resource management consistent with SDG target 12.2 (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020; Satriabhawana 2024).

The mosque's engagement with global sustainability norms extends beyond its physical infrastructure. Istiqlal also plays a significant role in non-physical forms of environmental governance through da'wah and public campaigns. Da'wah at Istiglal serves as an educational tool to promote environmental awareness, often directly grounded in Islamic teachings. Friday sermons frequently address themes such as "The Importance of Preserving the Environment," "Islam and the Environment," "Spiritual Ecology in Caring for the Universe," and "Preserving the Environment in the Manner of the Prophet," stressing that Muslims must maintain their relationships not only with God and fellow humans, but also with nature (Istiqlal 2022a, 2024, 2025a). In parallel, Istiqlal has organized studies on environmental protection, including programs titled "Ecological Interpretation of the Caliphate and Green Lifestyle" and "Green the Earth, Draw Closer to the Divine," which highlight that environmental and climate change are partly driven by human actions and call on congregants to protect the ecosystem in line with Qur'anic and Hadith teachings (Istiqlal 2025b).

Environmental campaigns further extend these messages into concrete programs. The Istiqlal Global Fund has facilitated tree-planting initiatives that create green open spaces and improve local climatic conditions around the mosque (Istiqlal 2023, 2025a). The introduction of an energy waqf scheme, realized through the installation and use of a Solar Power Plant (PLTS), promotes public participation in providing clean energy for the mosque's operations (Istiqlal 2021). This campaign is reinforced by community support and forms part of

Istiqlal's broader Smart and Green Mosque agenda. Beyond the mosque itself, the launch of the Haji Hijau application extends environmental awareness to the performance of Hajj and Umrah by offering practical guidance for reducing water and energy use, minimizing waste—particularly plastic—and encouraging the use of public transportation (Istiqlal 2022b).

Taken together, these *da'wah* activities and environmental campaigns align closely with SDG 13 on climate action. They contribute to target 13.3 on raising education, awareness, and capacity for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to target 13.2 by integrating climate considerations into socio-religious practices and encouraging public engagement in the national mitigation agenda (Halkos and Gkampoura 2020). Mosques thus serve as key centers for disseminating Islamic ecological literacy and climate awareness—and Istiqlal exemplifies how such institutions can mobilize collective action towards achieving global climate goals.

Istiqlal's environmental achievements have also been recognized internationally. The mosque received the Green Building Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE) Certificate from the International Finance Corporation in recognition of its reductions in energy consumption, water use, and material intensity, particularly in relation to SDGs 6, 7, 12, and 13. Assessments showed a 23% reduction in energy use, a 36% reduction in water consumption, and an 81% reduction in material consumption, partly through the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels (Kementerian PUPR 2022). These figures underscore the mosque's substantial efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and demonstrate its commitment to sustainability both through its physical structure as well as the programs implemented by the Istiqlal Mosque Management Agency (Kementerian PUPR 2022).

Comparable initiatives are emerging in other Muslim-majority and historically Muslim contexts. The Raja Haji Fisabilillah Mosque in Malaysia is distinguished by its modern technologies, including low-E glass, solar panels, and green roofs; it has achieved GBI Platinum certification. The Grand Mosque (al-Haram) in Saudi Arabia blends local materials with contemporary innovations, particularly in its water recycling system and efficient lighting, though its green spaces are constrained by geography. The Sultan Ahmed Mosque (Blue Mosque) in Turkey employs traditional methods such as natural ventilation,

strategic orientation, and courtyard gardens, while the Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali exemplifies a traditional sustainable approach by using mud bricks, natural cooling, open spaces, and community involvement in maintenance. Each of these mosques deploys distinct sustainability practices shaped by geographical context, construction period, availability of technology, and local cultural values (Yu et al. 2025). Within this broader landscape, Istiqlal stands out as a case where global environmental norms, national regulatory frameworks, and Islamic religious authority intersect to produce a highly visible form of faith-based environmental governance in Indonesia.

Islamic Environmental Stewardship

Islamic conceptions of environmental responsibility offer an important ethical frame through which contemporary sustainability agendas are interpreted and practiced in Indonesia. Rather than a fixed doctrinal position, these conceptions operate as a moral vocabulary that shapes how Muslim institutions understand their obligations toward ecological balance, public welfare, and intergenerational justice. As discussed earlier, scholars of Islamic environmentalism have highlighted Qur'anic categories function not only as spiritual ideals but also as normative resources that guide public reasoning about environmental governance (Foltz 2005; Khalid 2010; Gade 2015). In Indonesia, this ethical grammar is mobilized across multiple institutional arenas, from pesantren curricula and philanthropic programs to fatwa committees and mosque-based environmental initiatives. What emerges is a dynamic process of ethical interpretation that renders sustainability concerns locally intelligible and socially embedded.

Islamic teachings set out the relationship between humans, other living beings, and the environment, as delineated in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Various methodologies exist for interpreting the *Qur'an*, including the *Ijmali* (Global), *Tahlili*, *Maqarin* (Comparative), and *Maudhu'i* (Thematic) methods. This study employs the *Maudhu'i* (thematic) method, which involves semantic analysis (Sunarsa 2019). This approach focuses on specific themes or topics pertinent to human life, facilitating the resolution of issues in accordance with the *Qur'an*. This method was selected to enhance the comprehension of the interrelationship between Islamic values and sustainability, particularly in the context of environmental conservation.

Islam provides a robust ethical and spiritual framework for environmental stewardship in the Muslim world. Islamic principles advocate for the conservation of nature and ecological justice. In this institutional context, Qur'anic principles are not presented here as exegetical findings per se, but as ethical categories actively mobilized by Indonesian religious institutions, including Istiglal, to legitimize sustainability practices. Thematic discussions on the environment can be found in verses such as Surah Al-Bagarah (2): 164, Surah Al-Araf (7): 56, Surah Ar Rahman (55): 7-9, and Surah Ar-Rum (30): 41. These verses offer both practical and spiritual guidance for the stewardship of nature as a trust from Allah, underscoring the necessity of acting with wisdom, fairness, and responsibility in the utilization of natural resources to ensure ecosystem sustainability (Kartika, Galib, and Abubakar 2025). These verses and thematic interpretations are widely referenced in sermons, fatwas, and mosque-based environmental programs, and thus function as an authoritative moral grammar through which environmental governance is framed and justified.

A thematic analysis of *Surah* Al-Baqarah, verse 164, suggests that Allah has carefully crafted terrestrial elements, including water, flora, fauna, and wind to sustain human existence. This interpretation suggests that the presence of these elements signifies Allah's omnipotence. Furthermore, the text asserts the interconnectedness of these elements across nature's life cycle, exemplified by the way water sustains plant life and wind aids in seed dispersal. Water descends from the atmosphere to nourish the earth, vegetation emerges from plant seeds, and wind facilitates seed dispersal. This aligns with the previous verse, which urges humanity to take responsibility for the conservation of these elements and to recognize Allah's magnificence through His creation (Kartika, Galib, and Abubakar 2025).

Surah Al-A'raf (7): 56 warns humanity against harming the earth, interpreted as a directive to protect the planet and refrain from activities that lead to its destruction. As per Ibn Kathir's (1999) interpretation, this verse directs humans to safeguard nature as an expression of their devotion to Allah. The verse holds contemporary relevance in addressing various environmental challenges, including the excessive exploitation of natural resources, pollution, and deforestation. It asserts that humans bear a moral and spiritual responsibility to enhance and preserve the earth rather than degrade the environment (Kartika, Galib, and Abubakar 2025).

Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55): 7–9 asserts the principle of balance in Allah's creation: that all elements on earth have been precisely fashioned with balance in mind. The thematic interpretation of this verse instructs humans to uphold the existing balance within every element on earth by refraining from causing harm or overexploiting it. It warns against the excessive exploitation of nature, which could precipitate environmental catastrophes, and advocates for the equitable utilization of natural resources by humanity (Kartika, Galib, and Abubakar 2025).

Considering contemporary environmental challenges, some have posited that *Surah* Ar-Rum 41 provides valuable insights into ecological issues such as climate change, water pollution, and habitat destruction. These forms of environmental degradation are attributable to human actions that are misaligned with the principle of *mīzān*. This verse subtly encourages the consideration of tangible measures to mitigate the damage inflicted by human activity (Kartika, Galib, and Abubakar 2025).

The Islamic perspective on ecological degradation aligns closely with the concept of fasād, as articulated in various classical sources. Fasād encompasses all forms of harm, destruction, and devastation inflicted by humans on the earth, a concern expressed by angels when humans were entrusted with the stewardship of the Earth. This perspective underscores that human actions detrimental to the land, sea, and ecological equilibrium constitute not merely ethical lapses but also a moral breach of the divine mandate bestowed by Allah. Such destructive behavior is antithetical to the human role of safeguarding and improving the earth. Islam further emphasizes balance (mīzān) as a fundamental principle underpinning all creations. This balance extends beyond the physical realm to encompass moral and social dimensions of health. Every living entity, including plants, animals, water, and air, functions within predetermined proportions and harmony with its environment. When humans transgress these boundaries through excessive consumption, resource exploitation, or unsustainable lifestyles, all the other elements in the interconnected ecological system are disrupted. The principle of mīzān obliges humans to engage with nature in a just and proportional manner, without disturbing the order established by Allah (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024a).

The concept of human responsibility as caliphs underscores a significant trust that requires accountability. This role is not intended

to exert dominance over nature; rather, it embodies the responsibility to care for and prevent destruction. This perspective holds that humans will be held accountable for any damage inflicted upon other living entities (such as animals, land, and water) and the ecosystem. Consequently, maintaining ecological balance, preventing harm, and ensuring environmental sustainability are integral components of the spiritual ethics of servants (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024b). This awareness is further reinforced by the belief that all living beings on earth constitute an ummah or community of creation, each possessing intrinsic value and a distinct role before Allah. Every creature is perceived to be part of Allah's will, playing its small part in sustaining the continuity of life. In turn, actions that destroy habitats, harm animals, or disrupt the ecological balance are not only unethical but also contravene the principles of justice and compassion, as taught by Islam. Therefore, the preservation of all living beings is an essential aspect of ecological ethics, reflecting humanity's mandate as stewards of the earth (Llewellyn and Khalid 2024b).

The establishment of a Green Mosque at Istiglal Mosque exemplifies the integration of Islamic principles concerning ecological stewardship with sustainable development objectives. The ethical framework for environmental management at Istiqlal is grounded in the principles of maintaining the balance of nature, preserving Allah's creation, and preventing harm, as articulated in Sūrah al-Bagarah (2):164, Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):56, Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55):7-9, and Sūrah al-Rūm (30):41. These verses underscore that meaningful conservation of the natural world transcends mere technical considerations and requires a spiritual obligation for humans, as caliphs on earth. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which focuses on Clean Water and Sanitation, and SDG 7, which emphasizes Affordable and Clean Energy, Istiqlal has implemented water efficiency measures through the installation of water-saving faucets and a wudhu water management system in its mosque. This initiative reflects the Islamic principle of avoiding waste and environmental harm, as articulated in Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):56. Concurrently, the adoption of solar panels, LED lighting, and energy management systems contributes to the reduction of fossil fuel consumption, embodying the principle of mīzān, or balance, as highlighted in Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55):7-9, which underscores the necessity of maintaining an ecological equilibrium. Consequently, the

water and energy strategies at Istiqlal both comply with green building standards *and* embody Islamic environmental ethics.

In the domains of SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), Istiqlal repurposed old building materials during renovations, selected materials conducive to thermal comfort, and employed natural ventilation and lighting to mitigate emissions. These all align with the admonition in *Surah* Ar-Rum (30):41 regarding the detrimental effects of human behavior and the imperative to avoid excessive consumption. Furthermore, Istiqlal's *da'wah* and environmental campaigns enhance the congregation's ecological awareness, consistent with the message of *Surah* Al-Baqarah (2):164, which encourages reflection on the manifestations of Allah's power in natural phenomena.

The notion of *amānah* is especially central in this interpretive landscape. As discussed by Nasr (1996) and by Indonesian scholars of tafsir, *amānah* frames human interaction with nature as an entrusted responsibility, rather than an exercise of domination. This trust is relational: humans are accountable for how their actions affect the wider *ummah al-makhlūqāt*—the community of creation encompassing animals, plants, water, and land. Such interpretations resonate with the established legal-ethical principles of *maslahah* (public good) and *lā ḍarar* (prohibition of harm), which have historically shaped Muslim understandings of social welfare. When environmental degradation is interpreted as *fasād*, it is understood not only as ecological damage but also as a moral breach of the entrusted role of stewardship, reinforcing a link between environmental protection, justice, and compassion.

Within Indonesia's contemporary sustainability landscape, Islamic principles are increasingly translated into concrete institutional practices. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia's environmental fatwas frame waste reduction, conservation, and wildlife protection as religious obligations. Muhammadiyah's eco-building programs and Nahdlatul Ulama's *pesantren*-based environmental education extend this framing by linking the preservation of *mīzān* to community welfare. These initiatives illustrate a wider pattern in which global sustainability concerns are vernacularized through Islamic moral reasoning, producing locally grounded interpretations of environmental responsibility.

The transformation of Istiqlal Mosque into a Green Mosque provides a compelling example of how these ethical principles can

be institutionalized. As Indonesia's largest mosque and a national symbol of Islamic authority, Istiqlal's environmental reforms—water efficiency systems, renewable energy adoption, material reuse, and waste minimization—are framed by its leadership as expressions of amānah and efforts to prevent fasād. The focus on balance, seen in responsible water use and energy conservation, reflects a reading of mīzān that links ecological equilibrium with moral equilibrium. By anchoring sustainability measures in Qur'anic discourse, Istiqlal positions environmental protection as part of its religious mission, while simultaneously aligning its reforms with global frameworks such as the SDGs.

The case study of Istiqlal powerfully demonstrates how Islamic values can shape environmental governance in ways that are both contextually grounded and socially resonant. Rather than relying solely on technical expertise, Istiqlal's initiatives draw legitimacy from widely recognized Islamic ethical categories. Through sermons, public programs, and educational activities, the mosque embeds ecological responsibility within moral commitments that are already familiar to Indonesian Muslims. By linking global sustainability norms with the lived ethical worlds of local communities, religious institutions can mediate how environmental norms are interpreted, negotiated, and implemented in Indonesia.

Islamic environmental stewardship in Indonesia is therefore an evolving relationship between ethical traditions and contemporary global governance. It illustrates how religious reasoning can pursue sustainability agendas not simply by replicating global discourses, but by grounding them in values that already structure social life. The convergence of ethical traditions, institutional practices, and public expectations creates a distinctive pathway through which sustainability is imagined and enacted—one that is neither purely theological nor purely technological, but embedded in the moral and institutional rhythms of Indonesian Muslim society.

Istiqlal as a Catalyst for Sustainable Practice

The Green Mosque initiative at Istiqlal illustrates how Islamic environmental ethics gain social and political relevance and resonance when disseminated through religious authority, organizational routines, and public-facing religious communication. While the discussion above outlines the Qur'anic principles that lend support for the concept of environmental stewardship, the case of Istiqlal shows that such principles can be realized in practice when mediated through an institution capable of shaping norms, guiding expectations, and influencing behavior.

Religious institutions in Indonesia have long served as moral authorities, with Istiqlal's environmental program being the latest example. As Bratton (2021) argues, religious institutions influence collective behavior not only through doctrinal teaching but through the legitimacy they command. Schliesser (2024) likewise notes the growing involvement of faith-based institutions in advancing the SDGs by grounding global sustainability frameworks in local religious vocabularies. Istiqlal exemplifies this dynamic by translating Islamic teachings on stewardship into a governance model that connects congregational ethics, national policy commitments, and global climate agendas.

The program's alignment with Indonesia's development trajectory only strengthens its influence. The Green Mosque aligns with the Asta Cita vision for sustainability, the national commitment to NZE by 2060, and the Low Carbon Development (PRK) framework of the RPJMN 2025–2029 (Bappenas 2025). Through renewable energy installations, water efficiency, and material reuse, Istiqlal contributes directly to PRK targets for emission reductions in the energy and building sectors. These measures are framed not as purely technical upgrades but also as enactments of Islamic responsibility—rooted in the moral language of *amānah* and *mīzān*.

The technical results are measurable. An IFC audit reported that smart lighting systems, natural illumination, and rooftop solar panels reduced electricity use by 23 percent—an annual saving of around 115 MWh and an emissions reduction of approximately 94 tons of CO₂, based on Indonesia's emission factor (EDGE 2022; Satriabhawana 2024). Water-saving technologies, including reverse osmosis recycling of wudhu water, cut water consumption by 36 percent and reduced an additional 10–12 tons of CO₂ from water processing (Kusuma 2022). Annual emission reductions now exceed 100 tons, placing Istiqlal among the most quantifiable religious-sector climate initiatives in Southeast Asia.

The program also reshapes social practice. Environmental campaigns and sermons that have framed conservation as a form of spiritual

obedience have encouraged worshippers to adopt more sustainable habits: one study suggests over 70 percent now use refillable bottles, minimize single-use plastics, and participate in Ramadan tree-planting activities (Kahfi 2025). In this way, conservation becomes embedded in everyday religious life—not as an external agenda imposed upon the community but as an extension of existing worship and moral discipline. By framing ecological responsibility as part of religious devotion, Istiqlal localizes global values while strengthening Indonesia's moral diplomacy. This finding aligns with broader scholarship showing how religious authority can shift social norms in ways that are rarely achievable through technical interventions alone.

Institutionally, Istiqlal's influence has expanded beyond its immediate congregation. The Ministry of Religious Affairs adopted its management model as the national standard for the Environmentally Friendly Mosque program, scheduled for phased implementation across all provinces from 2025 onward (Kemenag 2025). This diffusion underscores how innovations originating in a single religious institution can act as a catalyst for wider policy reform. Internationally, UNEP's 2022 recognition of Istiqlal as an exemplary case of Faith and Climate Action affirms its status as a non-state actor in global environmental governance.

The case of Istiqlal shows that Islamic ecological ethics can become socially embedded when ethical teaching, institutional authority, and technical innovation are aligned. The Green Mosque is therefore more than a model of sustainable architecture; it represents an institutional mechanism through which mutually reinforcing Islamic values, national development strategies, and global climate initiatives can cultivate durable patterns of environmental responsibility.

Conclusion

The case of Istiqlal demonstrates that the environmental turn within Islamic institutions is not only about the technological retrofitting of mosques; it also relates to the moral authority that gives such changes broader religious meaning, and the institutional practices that embed acts of environmental stewardship into community behavior. Its initiatives show how sustainability norms become influential when articulated through sermons, managerial routines, and communal programs, allowing global agendas to

resonate through everyday religious life. This trajectory underscores the potential of mosques to function as institutional mediators of environmental governance with the capacity to shape public norms and behavioral change.

At the same time, the Istiqlal case reveals the interpretive work which religious leaders and institutional structures undertake to select, frame, and authorize elements of global sustainability discourse. Their engagement renders principles such as stewardship, balance, and the avoidance of harm institutionally actionable, aligning them with both national policy priorities and contemporary Islamic ethical vocabularies, including the normative guidance articulated in *Al-Mīzān: A Covenant for the Earth*. These dynamics show that Islamic institutions are not passive recipients of global sustainability ideas, but rather actors that actively shape how they circulate and take form within local religious governance.

By considering institutional practices (not just technical features), this article contributes to discussions on faith-based environmental governance and the place of religious institutions within global governance. A brief look at broader global developments shows that Green Mosque initiatives differ widely in how sustainability is embedded within religious administration. Within this wider context, the Istiqlal case represents a model in which environmental governance is institutionalized through national policy alignment, Islamic ethical discourse, and community engagement. The coming years will be important for gaining a fuller understanding of the evolving environmental roles of Islamic institutions and their significance for the localization of global sustainability agendas elsewhere.

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- 7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

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