

Preserving the Earth as Maqashid al-Shariah: A Maqashidi Interpretation of Qur'anic Verses Prohibiting Environmental Corruption

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the Qur'anic verses prohibiting acts of destruction on earth using a maqashidi exegetical approach, integrating them into the five aspects of *daruriyyat al-khamsah* (religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property). Employing a qualitative library-based research method with a thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach, this study analyzes QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41, with reference to four contemporary commentaries: *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir al-Jawahir*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The findings demonstrate that the prohibition against causing damage on earth constitutes an integral part of the objectives of Islamic law (*maqashid al-syariah*). Furthermore, this research offers a critical analysis of the limitations of classical exegesis in addressing contemporary ecological issues and proposes *hifz al-bi'ah* (environmental preservation) as a solution to environmental degradation. The results show that the prohibition against causing damage on earth is not merely an ecological moral imperative but an integral part of the objectives of sharia. These four verses implicitly contain the protection of all five maqashid simultaneously. Thus, environmental preservation from a maqashid perspective is an obligation equivalent to protecting religion, soul, intellect, lineage, and property.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis has become a never-ending problem. Forest fires covering 90,405 hectares in Indonesia in 2023 (Wulandari & Almas, 2024) and the threat of tropical forest extinction within the next 50 years are undeniable facts resulting from massive and uncontrolled deforestation (Rossidy, 2014). However, beneath these ecological data lies the root cause of the problem: the values, habits, and beliefs of humans as managers of nature (Thayyarah, 2013). Islam has long demonstrated serious attention to environmental preservation, as reflected in the prohibitions against causing damage on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11, 205; QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56; QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41). Numerous scholars have examined environmental preservation through the maqashidi exegetical approach. Among them, Al-Syaukani and Al-Qurthubi interpreted the verse وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا as a prohibition against polluting water (Zubairin, 2026). The maqashidi interpretive approach does not merely read the text literally but explores the divine purposes behind it. Consequently, this approach serves as a relevant instrument for responding to contemporary ecological crises (Cholidi & Masuwd, 2025). Several studies have examined environmental damage from a maqashidi tafsir perspective, namely L. Sholehuddin (2021) demonstrated that environmental damage occurs due to human traits such as polytheism, hypocrisy, greed, and selfishness, and subsequently offered solutions through strengthening monotheism and morality.

Nizaruddin (2024) studied the terms used by the Qur'an related to environmental damage, namely *fasād* and *halaka*. Nadia & Hidayat (2023) studied *maqashid al-Qur'an* regarding environmental damage, as well as the *wasilah* and *ghayah* contained in Qs. Ar-Rum verse 41.

Meanwhile, Nafi'ah (2023) studied environmental damage through a *maqashidi* tafsir approach on Qs. Ar-Rum verse 41 and linked it to four aspects of *maqashid*, namely *hifz al-din*, *hifz al-nafs*, *hifz al-nasl*, and *hifz al-bi'ah*. However, previous studies still contain gaps. From a methodological perspective, the approaches employed remain limited and have not applied *maqashid* as a comprehensive analytical system, as they are restricted to one or two verses and only a few aspects of *maqashid*. Conceptually, no research has combined the four verses prohibiting acts of damage on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41) with the five principles of *maqashid* (*daruriyyat al-khamsah*), despite the fact that ecosystem degradation has been proven to threaten all five aspects simultaneously (Rosid & Mahfudz, 2025). This research aims to fill this gap by offering a *maqashidi* exegetical approach that connects each prohibition against damage in the Qur'anic verses with the five principles of *maqashid al-syariah*. Accordingly, this study not only provides normative assessments but also offers constructive solutions for sustainable environmental preservation behavior, both at individual and societal levels.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative library-based approach (*library research*) with a thematic (*maudhu'i*) method, which involves collecting Qur'anic verses that share similar themes. The primary data consist of Qur'anic verses that specifically address the prohibition against causing damage on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41) and their interpretations in *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Secondary data include literature on the prohibition against causing damage on earth and *maqashidi* exegesis. This study follows the steps of *maqashidi* exegesis formulated by al-Raisuni and Abdul Mustaqim, namely through thematic tracing of relevant Qur'anic verses (Mustaqim, 2019; Rifqi & Thahir, 2019). In the *Mu'jam al-Mufahrās li Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, there are 28 verses discussing damage on earth; however, this study focuses on four verses that specifically address the prohibition against causing damage on earth. The analysis was conducted through identification and classification of verses based on thematic similarities (Daruhadi, & Sopiati, P., 2024). Subsequently, these were linked to the *maqashidi* exegetical approach to determine the connection between the verses prohibiting damage and the *daruriyyat al-khamsah* (the five essential objectives of Islamic law). The selection of the four commentaries is based on the consideration that they are all contemporary exegeses that are responsive to modern issues and methodologically complementary: *al-Maraghi* and *al-Jawahir* represent the socio-scientific approach characteristic of the Middle East, while *al-Misbah* and *al-Azhar* represent the sociocultural context of the Nusantara. This combination enables the study to bridge global discourse and local realities in interpreting the verses on environmental damage in a more balanced manner.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

3.1 Identification and Exegesis of the Verses Prohibiting Acts of Damage on Earth

This study employs the thematic (*maudhu'i*) method by collecting Qur'anic verses that address the prohibition against causing damage on earth. Based on the identification process, four verses were obtained as the objects of analysis, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Identification of Verses and Their Main Themes

No	Surah and Verse	Arabic Text	Main Theme
1.	Qs. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11	وَلِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ	Criticism of hypocrites who cause damage under the pretext of reform

2.	QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205	وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ	Warning against those who damage crops and livestock
3.	QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56	وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ	Prohibition of causing damage after reformation
4.	QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41	ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ	Damage on land and sea as a consequence of human deeds

3.1.1 QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11

This verse prohibits all actions that may cause damage. Al-Maraghi emphasizes that the perpetrators of damage in every age always claim to be reformers, when in reality they are corruptors who conceal their evil through deception (Al-Maraghi, 1993). Their envy toward the progress brought by the Prophet and the believers drives them to oppose secretly, and when rebuked, they pretend to seek peace (Hamka, 2015). This verse illustrates that they are true corruptors because their evil deeds are numerous and repeated (Shihab, 2002). In *Tafsir al-Jawahir*, Thanthawi divides damage into three levels: damaging oneself through bad habits, damaging others by spreading evil and bequeathing it to children, and damaging society through hostility, severing family ties, and obstructing public welfare. The damage they commit is not limited to one place but encompasses the entire earth. The term “earth” here refers to the planet we inhabit along with all its contents that can be damaged, including humans, animals, plants, and the systems and natural balance established by Allah. Destroying one part of the earth is considered a disgrace to the entire earth (Ibnu Asyur, 2011).

3.1.2 QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205

This verse portrays the behavior of those who turn away from the truth, especially after gaining power (Ibnu Asyur, 2011). When in power, they actively strive to cause damage on earth, such as destroying crops and livestock (Shihab, 2002). Agriculture is the foundation of prosperity; however, when people’s minds are disturbed by the actions of corruptors, agriculture and animal husbandry decline. Without advanced agriculture and animal husbandry, the people’s prosperity will be lost. Some scholars interpret *annasla* not only as livestock but also as human progeny. Likewise, *tawalla* is interpreted not merely as turning away but as assuming power. This implies that if people with such destructive traits gain authority, decline will occur in all fields (Hamka, 2015). From the perspective of Islam, such behavior is considered a violation of moral and ethical values, as Islam emphasizes sustainability, justice, and natural balance. Al-Maraghi stresses that Allah does not approve of those who cause damage, and praiseworthy qualities will only be accepted by Allah if manifested in concrete actions, because Allah judges one's heart and deeds, not merely outward appearance or words (Al-Maraghi, 1993).

3.1.3 QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56

This verse explains the prohibition against damaging the earth after it has been reformed and brought to prosperity. Al-Maraghi expands the scope of this prohibition to encompass five fundamental aspects: destruction of life through murder, destruction of property through usurpation and theft, destruction of religion through disbelief and sin, destruction of lineage through adultery, and destruction of intellect through intoxicating beverages (Al-Maraghi, 1993). Ibnu ‘Asyur asserts that damaging part of the earth can be considered as damaging the entire earth, as the damage will spread to other parts that were previously good (Ibnu Asyur, 2011). Shihab emphasizes that Allah created the universe in a state of harmony and commanded humans to continuously improve it. One form of Allah's reformation is sending prophets to straighten and improve disordered societies. Thus, whoever obstructs their mission has committed an act of destruction on earth. He also adds that destroying something that has been reformed is far worse than destroying something that was already

damaged from the beginning (Shihab, 2002). A Muslim who is conscious of their faith is obligated to preserve what already exists and strive to make it better, beginning by drawing closer to Allah, living in society without causing damage, and then returning to Him (Hamka, 2015).

3.1.4 QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41

This verse explains that damage has appeared on land (drought, famine, and loss of security) and at sea (shipwrecks, depletion of fish, and pollution), all as a result of human wrongdoing, as a warning for them to return to the right path (Shihab, 2002). Hamka deepens this meaning by asserting that physical damage is a reflection of spiritual corruption caused by the accumulation of vices (disobedience, polytheism, tyranny, and hypocrisy), which ultimately drive humans to damage nature, such as polluting water and air (Hamka, 2015). Thanthawi categorizes damage into two types: that caused by human actions driven by base desires, and that which occurs naturally. As caliphs on earth, humans are responsible for acting justly toward all creatures by granting rights according to their needs and roles, and maintaining balance between humans and nature so that both may benefit (Ibnu Asyur, 2011). Sins and transgressions (*fasād*) committed by humans result in imbalance on land and sea. The more environmental destruction occurs, the greater its harmful impact on humans, as all creatures are interconnected in the harmony established by Allah (Shihab, 2002). At the end of the verse, humans are reminded to become aware of their role as caliphs by correcting their intentions and restoring their relationship with God (Hamka, 2015). Al-Maraghi adds that the punishment for transgression is given so that humans may repent and return to the path of guidance, and are reminded of the Day of Reckoning where justice prevails for all: the strong show compassion to the weak, public facilities are equally accessible to everyone, and society works optimally (Al-Maraghi, 1993).

3.2 Relevance of the Verses on Environmental Damage to Conditions in Indonesia

3.2.1 Illegal Mining (Relevance: QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11)

Illegal mining practices in Indonesia exemplify destructive behavior under the pretext of economic improvement. Based on data from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (2023), there were 2,741 locations nationwide, with 839 criminal cases recorded throughout 2023 (Ridwan, 2025). The impacts include damage to fertile land, mercury contamination of rivers, and social conflicts. Unsafe working conditions with exposure to toxic chemicals threaten the health and safety of workers and surrounding communities (Cadizza & Pratama, 2024). This case clearly reflects the behavior described in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11, where perpetrators of destruction claim to be reformers, when in fact they damage ecosystems and threaten human life (*hifz al-nafs*).

3.2.2 Forest and Land Fires (Relevance: QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205)

Forest and land fires (*karhutla*) in Indonesia in 2023 reached an alarming scale. Based on the UN report (UNDRR) and data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry through SiPongi+, the area of fires reached 1.16 million hectares, five times higher than in 2022 (UNDRR, 2024). Greenpeace Indonesia's analysis indicates that the indicative area of fires in 2023 reached at least 2.13 million hectares, nearly double the government's figure (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2025). This phenomenon has a direct correlation with QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205, which portrays the behavior of corruptors who, when in power, damage crops (*al-harts*) and threaten sustainability. Massive forest and land fires not only destroy vegetation and ecosystems but also release carbon emissions that exacerbate climate change, threaten public health through cross-border haze, and damage the livelihoods of surrounding communities (*hifz al-mal* and *hifz al-nasl*).

3.2.3 Industrial Pollution and AMDAL Violations (Relevance: QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56)

Environmental pollution caused by industrial activities that violate AMDAL (Environmental Impact Assessment) regulations represents a clear form of neglect toward the obligation to maintain the earth after it has been reformed. Cases of river pollution from textile and industrial waste lead to decreased water quality, impacting public health and aquatic ecosystems (Asy-Syifaa & Hasibuan, 2023). This condition reflects the violation of the principle emphasized in QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56, where Allah prohibits humans from causing damage on earth after creating it in a good and harmonious state (*hifz al-nafs* and *hifz al-nasl*).

3.2.4 Marine Pollution (Relevance: QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41)

Marine pollution in Indonesia has reached extremely alarming levels. Data from 2023 shows approximately 12.87 million tons of plastic waste accumulated and polluting Indonesian seas. This case directly reflects the message of QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41, which states that damage on land and sea occurs due to human actions. Massive marine pollution not only damages marine ecosystems and biodiversity but also threatens the livelihoods of fishermen, food security, and the health of coastal communities (*hifz al-mal*, *hifz al-nafs*, and *hifz al-nasl*) (Maha, 2024).

DISCUSSION

Critical Analysis of the Relationship Between the Verses and Maqashid al-Syariah

Maqashid exegesis is an approach that seeks to uncover the rational meanings and diverse objectives contained in the Qur'an, both universal and particular in nature. This approach draws upon the theory of *maqashid al-Qur'an* and *maqashid al-syariah*, which are intended to realize benefit (*maslahah*) and prevent harm (*mafsadah*) (Mustaqim, 2020). Within this framework, every verse needs to be analyzed to determine the extent to which it contains protection for the five essential objectives (*al-daruriyyat al-khamsah*). A critical analysis of the four verses prohibiting acts of damage on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 11 and 205; QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56; QS. Ar-Rum [30]: 41) reveals that the relationship between the verses and maqashid is neither symmetrical nor uniform. Jasser Auda, through his systems approach (*systems approach*) to maqashid al-syariah, classifies maqashid into three levels: *al-maqāšid al-juz'iyah* (partial), *al-maqāšid al-khāṣṣah* (specific), and *al-maqāšid al-'āmmah* (universal), whose interconnections are holistic and inseparable (Auda, 2015). These four verses exhibit varying emphases on maqashid depending on their context and wording. For instance, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 205 explicitly mentions the destruction of crops (*al-harts*) and progeny/livestock (*al-nasl*) two aspects directly related to the preservation of property (*hifz al-mal*) and lineage (*hifz al-nasl*). Meanwhile, QS. Al-A'raf [7]: 56, as interpreted by al-Maraghi, clearly encompasses all five aspects of damage (life, property, religion, lineage, and intellect) due to its general and universal wording. Al-Qurthubi and al-Zamakhsyari even associate the meaning of *fasād* with the loss of life's blessings, withheld rain, and the disruption of natural balance caused by human disobedience (Maisyaroh, 2025) This research demonstrates that environmental preservation has a close relationship with both *maqashid al-syariah* and *maqashid al-Qur'an*. By protecting the environment, one also safeguards the fundamental principles of human life, as the five objectives of Islamic law can only be realized if the environment remains preserved and sustainable. However, the relationship between environmental protection and the five aspects of maqashid cannot be generalized across all verses. Each verse possesses its own context, wording, and purpose that require careful analysis to avoid excessive generalization in interpretation.

Hifz al-Bi'ah a Solution to Environmental Degradation

The concept of maqashid al-syariah, as formulated by Imam al-Syatibi within the framework of *al-daruriyyat al-khamsah*, consists of five essential objectives: the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and property (*hifz al-mal*).

Contemporary Muslim scholars have subsequently undertaken a reconstruction of this classical framework. Yusuf al-Qardawi, through his work *Ri'āyat al-Bī'ah fī Shari'ah al-Islām*, emphasizes that Islam is an environmentally friendly religion and employs maqashid al-syariah as its primary approach. Through this framework, al-Qardawi positions environmental preservation (*hifz al-bi'ah*) as a prerequisite for the realization of the five maqashid al-syariah (Al-Qardāwī, 2001). Meanwhile, KH. Ali Yafie expands this framework into *al-daruriyyat al-sittah* (the six essential objectives) by adding *hifz al-bi'ah* as the sixth pillar, equal in status to the other five fundamental objectives (Yafie, 2006). This reconstruction has gained further authoritative legitimacy through the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Number 86 of 2023 concerning the Law on Global Climate Change Control. This fatwa represents the first religious response to establish environmental protection as a syar'i obligation. The findings indicate that the prohibition of deforestation and high emissions (Article 2 of the Fatwa) constitutes an actualization of *hifz al-bi'ah* as the sixth maqashid, aimed at preventing threats to food security (*hifz al-nafs*) and economic disruption (*hifz al-mal*) (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2023). Behind the recognition of *hifz al-bi'ah* as the sixth maqashid lies the fact that neglect of the environment has been proven to directly threaten human safety. The ecological disasters that have occurred in Indonesia in recent years serve as evidence of this neglect. Floods, landslides, and forest fires are logical consequences of deforestation and exploitative spatial planning. As a result, maqashid al-syariah collapses one by one: life is threatened, property is destroyed, and future generations lose their prospects. Thus, *hifz al-bi'ah* is not merely a derivative of other maqashid; rather, it is a prerequisite for the realization of all objectives of Islamic law, standing equal to the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.

4. CONCLUSION

The increasingly widespread environmental degradation cannot be separated from human behavior that neglects ecological balance and its responsibility as *khalifah* (steward) on earth. Through the maqashidi exegetical approach, which does not merely read the Qur'anic text literally but also explores the divine purposes behind the prohibition against causing damage on earth, environmental preservation is understood as an obligation equivalent to safeguarding religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. This research integrates four Qur'anic verses concerning environmental preservation (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 11, QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 205, QS. al-A'raf [7]: 56, and QS. ar-Rum [30]: 41) within a single maqashidi exegetical analytical framework, with reference to four contemporary commentaries: *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir al-Jawahir*, *Tafsir al-Misbah*, and *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The main findings indicate that the prohibition against causing damage on earth is not merely ecological in nature but also constitutes an integral part of the objectives of Islamic law (*maqashid al-syariah*). These four verses implicitly contain protection for all five aspects of *daruriyyat al-khamsah*: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. However, the relationship between the verses and maqashid is not uniform, as each verse emphasizes different aspects according to its context and wording. On the other hand, this research has limitations in terms of the scope of verses, as it only examines four verses and thus has not covered the entirety of verses addressing environmental damage. In terms of exegetical literature, this study focuses solely on four contemporary commentaries, thereby not thoroughly exploring classical exegeses that discuss the term *fasād*, nor comparing them with other contemporary commentaries that possess different methodological characteristics. These limitations naturally restrict the generalizability of the findings and open opportunities for future research to enrich the analysis by expanding the corpus of verses and the range of exegetical literature employed.

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