

Landscapes Of The Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia's Concern For Environmental Components In Light Of Shari'ah And Regulatory Texts: Forests As An Epitome

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's integrated approach to environmental protection, focusing on forest development and conservation as a practical model. This approach is based on Islamic law, which forms the foundation of the kingdom's legal and regulatory system, reflecting a deep religious and ethical commitment to preserving natural resources. The study reviews the authentic jurisprudential principles of Sharia, such as achieving interests, considering consequences, and preventing harm, which have guided scholars since the early centuries and continue to frame contemporary environmental policies. It seeks to demonstrate how regulatory frameworks have evolved to include practical measures to protect forests, prevent harmful practices, and enable sustainable development, in line with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. It also highlights the establishment of specialized institutions, such as the National Center for Vegetation Development, as an embodiment of the Kingdom's commitment to implementing these principles. This paper thus presents a unique model of environmental governance based on Sharia, codification, and a future-oriented vision.

Keywords: Forest protection, Saudi ecosystem, general jurisprudential rules, Vision 2030, sustainable development, vegetation regulations.

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its constitution from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and in light of the texts, rules, and objectives of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The state establishes its executive systems for all aspects of state work, the care of its interests and its citizens, and their protection. This is evident from the text of Article 1 of the Political System of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which states that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an Arab, Islamic state with full sovereignty. Its religion is Islam, its constitution is the Book of Allah Almighty and the Sunnah of His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and its language is Arabic. Article 7 also states, "The government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of Allah Almighty and the Sunnah of His Messenger, which govern this system and all state systems. Hakami, and Dahami, (2024a), state, "Allah has blessed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the ability to enact laws and regulations in all areas of life based on Sharia (Islamic law)." Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken care to protect, nurture, and develop all elements of the environment. This effort is based on its constitution, which is based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). "The Shari'ah texts, with its goals, generalizations, restrictions, absolutes, and implied meanings, as well as its maxims and objectives, all highlight the need to develop the environment in general and the forests in particular because doing so will inevitably help achieve the planet's primary goals" (Hakami, and Dahami, 2024b). The Sharia texts clearly show that it is important to develop the environment, especially forests, to fulfill the purposes for which they were created on Earth. Since the Constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on Sharia texts, it has enacted regulations to care for environmental components in general and to develop and protect forests in particular, such as the Pastures and Forests Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/55 dated 29/10/1425 AH and the Environment Law issued on 10/07/2020 AD. The Ministry of Agriculture developed the National Forestry Strategy

and Action Plan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was approved by the esteemed Council of Ministers for the period 1426-1446 AH, pursuant to Resolution No. 306 dated 12/23/1426 AH. Vision 2030 included several projects and initiatives, such as the Green Saudi Arabia Initiative and the Green Middle East Initiative. Cabinet Resolution No. 417, dated 19/07/1440 AH, also established the National Center for Vegetation Development. The center oversees the management and investment of rangelands, forests, and national parks; conserves plant genetic resources and vegetation outside protected areas in the kingdom, including all habitats; and combats desertification. The center has various activities related to forest development and protection, including the "Developing Capacity for Drought Preparedness and Mitigation in the Kingdom" initiative, which falls within the National Transformation Program initiatives to achieve Vision 2030. It also launched surveillance patrols and drones to monitor and detect encroachments and violations on vegetation, apprehend perpetrators, and take appropriate action in accordance with the executive regulations of the Environmental Law. It also participated in World Forest Day on March 21. To shed light on the attention paid by Islamic texts to all that serves the interests of people in general and forests in particular, as well as the attention paid by Saudi legislators to this aspect, based on the state's constitution's commitment to protecting the environment in general and forests in particular. The researchers chose to write this scientific paper on a topic entitled "Features of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Concern for Environmental Components in Light of Islamic and Regulatory Texts—Forests as a Model."

The Importance of the Topic and Reasons for Its Selection

Furthermore, the significance of this topic and the rationale for its selection are clearly demonstrated in the following points: Highlighting Saudi Arabia's concern for environmental components, including forests, in light of Islamic and regulatory texts.

- Explaining the attention paid by regulatory texts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to forest development and protection.
- Emphasizing that Saudi legislators are guided by the state's constitution, which is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Research Methodology

The research uses induction and descriptive methods to look at key Islamic texts related to the topic, and then it reviews the laws approved by Saudi legislators for forest development and protection.

Research Plan

The research consists of an introduction, a theoretical framework, and a main section.

Introduction includes the importance of the topic, the reasons for its selection, its methodology, and its plan. The theoretical framework begins by introducing forests and elucidating their significance. The Main Section contains an explanation, description, and commentary on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to forests. It follows the conclusion that includes the most important findings and recommendations.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Theoretical Framework

First: Definition of the Term "Forests"

A forest, in Arabic, is a thicket of dense, intertwined trees. It is so named because it conceals its surroundings. The word "forest" in Arabic is called "gābah" (plural: gābāt), which literally translates to "a place with thick and interwoven plants." The term "ghayyabah," which means to conceal anything from view, is the etymological root of the Arabic word for forests. The reason for this name is that woods conceal what is within them from view (Hakami, and Dahami, 2024b; Ibn al-Athīr, 1979, p. 399). Ibn Hajar stated that a "ghābah" (a forest) is a location in the upper reaches of Medina, towards the Levant, and is also the name of a village in Bahrain. Its root word is "every intertwined tree" (Ibn Hajar, 1970a, Vol. 2, p. 399). Forests in Terminology: Saudi lawmakers defined them in Article 1 of the Pastures and Forests Law as "a plant community consisting of one or more species of trees, shrubs, or herbaceous plants, in a pure or mixed state, with a tree density of no less than 10%, whether this community is natural or planted." Alternatively, it refers to "land where trees or shrubs grow naturally, or land that the

state plants to protect the soil, watersheds, and the environment." The state owns it and includes rural forests" (Pastoral and Forestry Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/55 dated 29/10/1425 AH).

Second: The Importance of Forests, Their Areas, and Their Types in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Forests are of enormous importance due to their profound impact on human and animal life, both directly and indirectly. They are home to many animals, especially rare ones, and they have an effect on the climate. Their presence in an area makes it more temperate. Forests are home to a vast array of species, contributing to global biodiversity and ecosystem stability. The "benefits of forests, especially as carbon absorbers and oxygen producers, make the largest contribution to calculating the total economic value, so that policy makers need more attention in managing forests so that they remain sustainable" (Mayasari et al., 2024). They absorb large quantities of various air pollutants, such as carbon dioxide, from the atmosphere and release oxygen during photosynthesis. One hectare of forest can absorb between 220 and 280 kilograms of carbon dioxide and also release between 180 and 240 kilograms of oxygen. They also help absorb and purify dust, as one hectare of forest filters approximately 18 million cubic meters of air annually. Green areas contribute to a 100- to 1,000-fold reduction in solid air pollutants around cities and industrial areas and can trap 40 to 80 percent of suspended particles. Dense forests and trees help reduce wind speeds that stir up dust, leading to a 40 percent reduction in pollution. They also help thicken clouds and increase the chances of rainfall, especially in high-altitude areas. Forests are an important source of sustenance and livelihood for millions of people across the world (Zingkhai, 2015). Forests play a multifaceted role in supporting local economies and enriching community life through their provision of timber, fruits, and medicinal plants. They are not only vital for economic sustenance but also hold significant cultural and spiritual value, serving as spaces for recreation and community practices. This interplay of economic and cultural benefits points out the importance of forests in human society. Forests have always been beneficial in providing food for domesticated and wild animals, which convert plant matter into food consumed by humans in the form of meat and milk. They also provide a suitable environment for the growth of pasture plants. They also provide shade and shelter for humans and animals. All of this brings essential benefits to humans, both directly and indirectly. Forests play a crucial role in tourism development, serving as one of the natural resources upon which ecotourism is based, a sector that has experienced rapid growth in the current decade. They also contribute to providing job opportunities for local communities in forested areas. (The National Forest Strategy and Action Plan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pp. 19-25). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia boasts diverse areas and multiple types of forests. Although small relative to the kingdom's area, they represent a significant natural resource. Despite the kingdom's varying climate patterns, from severe aridity in the interior continental regions to a humid climate in the western highlands, the kingdom's terrain varies. And it is subject to varying air currents, such as the summer monsoons bringing rain in the southwest of the kingdom, the dry northeastern winds from Central Asia in the winter, and the Mediterranean winds in the spring. All these factors have led to a great diversity of plant species, with trees, shrubs, and perennials predominating in rainy areas. While dry areas bear annuals or remain devoid of greenery, 142 plant families, comprising 2,243 plant species, have been recorded across the kingdom. Natural pasture plants cover 171 million hectares, supporting just under 13 million domesticated animals, in addition to wild animals, representing 71% of the kingdom's total area. Forest lands, meanwhile, cover only approximately 2.7 million hectares, representing 1.2% of the kingdom's total area. While pasturelands cover most of the kingdom, forests are concentrated in the southwestern part of the Sarawat Mountains, with small amounts found in the meadows and valleys of other regions. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia boasts various natural forests, most of which are concentrated in the mountainous regions extending from the Hijaz Mountains in the north to the Asir Mountains in the south. These mountains range in height from 1,000 meters to more than 3,500 meters south toward Abha. The region's humid climate, with rainfall exceeding 300 mm, well-distributed throughout the year, favors tree growth. These trees, in turn, help moderate the local environment by reducing evaporation and maintaining high relative humidity. Temperatures vary according to altitude; for every 150 meters above sea level, the temperature decreases by an average of one degree Celsius. The distribution of tree species follows this gradient, and their various formations are divided into the following groups:

A - Juniper Forests:

Dense forests of wild evergreen trees grow on the peaks and highlands of the Hijaz and Asir Mountains, at elevations exceeding 2,000 meters. Phoenician juniper trees dominate in the north, and Las Vegas juniper trees in the Asir regions in the south. The two species are found intermingled in some areas of Taif, which is characterized by a climate influenced by overlapping air currents. Juniper, on the other hand, grows alone at higher elevations and intermingles with wild olive trees (Atam) up to an altitude of 1,700 meters. Many other plant species also coexist.

B - Wild olive forests (Atam)

This sort grows in areas with elevations ranging from 1,500 to 2,000 meters. These are broad-leaved evergreen forests, and Attam trees dominate this region and give it its overall appearance. At the top of this region, the Atham forests are found with juniper trees up to an altitude of 1,700 meters above sea level and then continue similarly with other tree groups. At these heights, some cold-resistant species of the Acacia genus begin to appear.

C - Low-altitude mountain forests:

This type grows in mountains ranging in elevation from 1,000 to 1,500 meters above sea level. These are deciduous forests composed of diverse plant groups. At the edge of the Atham forests, these trees have a medium density, but as they spread towards the interior plateaus, their density decreases and is dominated by acacia and balsam. Tree density increases in this formation, especially the Acacia and Balsam groups, in addition to some associated species such as Shath and Tabaq, among others. These mountain forests in the cold and semi-cold regions constitute the vast majority of the kingdom's forests, with an area of 2,150,000 hectares. They constitute approximately 80% of the total forests.

D - Semi-warm Forests:

Groups of trees grow in scattered forms on the slopes and valleys on the western side of the Sarawat Mountains. They spread from Tihama to the Red Sea coast, occupying an estimated area of 130,000 hectares. The most important species are tamarisk, sulm, sarh, some balsam species, and arak shrubs. This group constitutes approximately 5% of the kingdom's natural forests.

E - Pastoral Meadows and Valleys, Forests:

These trees grow scattered along the banks of valleys, in meadows, and in floodplains throughout the kingdom. Their types vary according to the region's soil and climate. These forests include acacia, tamarisk, arak, sidr, ghada, aurta, and many other pastoral tree and shrub species.

F - Mangrove forests:

Mangrove forests are found in many tidal zones along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. They usually consist of mangrove trees, which are the most prevalent and widespread. They also consist of gar trees, which are found in small quantities along the Red Sea coast and are rare along the Arabian Gulf coast. These trees can withstand salinity and are submerged in seawater, but most are found at the mouths of freshwater wadis, where these wadis carry soil rich in silt and organic matter to their outlets in the sea and the Gulf. Wildlife and camel grazing are active in such areas. Most mangrove forests are found on the Red Sea coast, spread between latitudes 25 and 27 degrees, from Jazan in the south to Al Wajh and Duba in the north. The area of this type of forest ranges between 2,000 and 6,000 hectares. The Arabian Gulf coast also hosts them, although their density is not as high as it is on the Red Sea coast. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has prioritized artificial (planted) forests. The kingdom boasts vast expanses and a striking diversity of environments, which are generally characterized by aridity and scant forest cover, except for the southwestern part. The need to increase forest cover has long been apparent. This is to stem sand encroachment, protect farms by lowering temperatures, limit wind speeds to reduce evaporation and transpiration, and combat soil erosion caused by rainfall, which often occurs in heavy downpours that cause floods and erosion of the soil surface. The need for forests also arose from the desire to enhance the residential environment by planting trees along streets in both cities and villages, as well as creating recreational and leisure areas. In light of these circumstances, the Ministry of Agriculture began a program to plant trees, improve forests, and stabilize dunes. The project, implemented in 1962, included a sand reservation in Al-Ahsa Governorate in the Eastern Province. The sand encroachment was occurring along a 25-kilometer-long front, with an average annual rate of 25-30 hectares, destroying agricultural land and residential areas along the entire length of the front, with a width ranging from 220 to 1,000 meters. The project's cultivated area reached 1,560 hectares, with 11 million seedlings and

cuttings planted in the form of four sand barriers parallel to the main barrier. This project is considered a success. After achieving its intended purpose, it underwent transformation into a national park. In 1966, the ministry began planting some natural sites that had lost their vegetation cover with forest trees, using fast-growing species. By 2000, the cultivated areas had reached 56 sites, with more than one million seedlings planted. The Ministry of Agriculture cooperates with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs to plant trees along streets within cities and villages, either as part of the annual Tree Planting Week or through independent projects. The Ministry of Agriculture provided more than 13 million seedlings for Tree Planting Weeks alone during the period 1988-2000. The Ministry of Agriculture has established several nurseries across the kingdom with a production capacity of one million seedlings per year. The ministry plans to establish five central nurseries to cover its needs for forest seedlings in the kingdom.

Features of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Concern for Forest Development and Protection.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derived its importance of caring for environmental components in general, and forests in particular, from Sharia texts. Its constitution is based on Sharia texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah. It has made rules and decisions that show its deep concern for the environment and forests. Among the most prominent features that reflect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's concern for forests are the following:

First: Sharia Texts

Since the Constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is necessary that Sharia texts be the most important starting points for caring for the environment in general and forests in particular. There are numerous Sharia texts that require environmental care and protection. Since He has subjugated everything to serve the interests of mankind, Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ﴾ [سورة ص: 27]

"And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them without purpose! That is the consideration of those who disbelieve! Then woe to those who disbelieve (in Islamic Monotheism) from the Fire!" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 614, verse 27 of Surat Sad), and Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ﴾ [الأنبياء: 16]

"We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for a (mere) play" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 430, verse 16 of Surat Al-Anbiya).

If we know that Allah did not create anything, including forests, we must carefully examine the Islamic texts that indicate how to develop and protect these forests, as this results in achieving the purposes for which they were created and which serve the interests of mankind. Islamic texts urge us to benefit from what Allah has created and subjected to us without tampering with it. Allah Almighty says,

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ﴾ [الملك: 15]

"He it is, Who has made the earth subservient to you (i.e. easy for you to walk, to live and to do agriculture on it, etc.), so walk in the path thereof and eat of His provision, and to Him will be the Resurrection" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, pp. 776-777, verse 15 of Surat Al-Mulk). Furthermore, Ibn Kathir said, "He, Glory be to Him, mentioned His blessings upon His creation in His subjecting the earth to them and making it subservient to them by making it a stable continent that does not expand or tremble, by placing mountains in it, causing springs to gush forth in it, creating paths in it, and preparing for it benefits and places for crops and fruits (Ibn Kathir, 1999c, vol. 8, p. 179). In addition Allah Almighty said,

﴿وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا﴾ [الأعراف: 56]

"And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 208, verse 56 of Surat Al-A'raf). So, Allah Almighty created the earth and reformed it, Glory be to Him, with everything that ensures the benefit of His servants, such as trees, valleys, and other things. Ibn 'Atiyyah said in his interpretation, "Al-Thahhak said: Its meaning is, do not drain the flowing water and do not cut down the fruitful trees to cause harm" (Ibn 'Atiyyah, 1997, vol. 2, p. 410). Allah said, blaming the people who turn away and spread corruption on earth,

﴿وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ﴾ [البقرة: 205]

"And when he turns away (from you "O Muhammad SAW"), his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 43,

verse 205 of Surat Al-Baqarah). The explanation for such an act is what Ibn Kathir indicated: This hypocrite has no concern other than spreading corruption on earth and destroying crops. Crops are the places where crops, fruits, and animals grow. They are the offspring of animals, without which people cannot survive (Ibn Kathir, 1999a, vol. 1, p. 564).

In addition, Allah the Almighty says, warning against mishandling His blessings,

﴿وَمَنْ يَبْدِلْ يُعْمَلْ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ [البقرة: 211]

"And whoever changes Allah's Favour after it had come to him, (e.g. renounces the Religion of Allah (Islam) and accepts Kufr (disbelief),) then surely, Allah is Severe in punishment" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 44, verse 211 of Surat Al-Baqarah). These, and many others, are texts that indicate the necessity of making use of the blessings Allah has bestowed upon us in nature and not spoiling them. And that the consequence of disobeying this is dire. Among the greatest of these blessings is the green cover of plants and trees. For this reason, Allah the Almighty bestowed His blessings upon His servants in His saying,

﴿وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْ ثَبَاتٍ شَتَّى﴾ [طه: ٥٣]

"and has sent down water (rain) from the sky. And We have brought forth with it various kinds of vegetation" (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 418, verse 53 of Surat Taha). That is, from the colors and types of plants, from crops and fruits, and from sour and sweet and all other types. Then Allah the Almighty says,

﴿كُلُوا وَارْزُقُوا أَنْعَامَكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى﴾ [طه: ٥٤]

"Eat and pasture your cattle, (therein); verily, in this are proofs and signs for men of understanding". (Al-Hilali et al., 1997, p. 418, verse 53 of Surat Taha); that is, something for your food and fruit, and something for your livestock; for its sustenance, green and dry. Moreover, Allah has provided evidence, arguments, and proofs for those of sound and upright minds. That there is no god but Allah and no lord but Him, as He, the Most High, says,

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى﴾

"(therein); verily, in this are proofs and signs for men of understanding". Simply this verse can mean 'indeed in that are signs for those of understanding'. (Ibn Kathir, 1999b, vol. 5, p. 299).

The texts of the Qur'an clearly show that we should develop and protect forests to meet people's needs and provide them with comfort and other benefits. Similarly, Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) also emphasizes the importance of taking care of forests. That is why Al-Bukhari included a chapter in his Sahih called "The virtue of planting and sowing when some of it is eaten," along with the statement from Allah: "Have you then considered that which you till? Is it you who cause it to grow, or are We the grower?" For this reason, Al-Bukhari included a chapter in his Sahih entitled "The virtue of planting and sowing when some of it is eaten," and the statement of Allah, the Most High: "Have you then considered that which you till? Is it you who cause it to grow, or are We the grower? If We willed, We could make it debris." He included in it the statement of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's prayers and peace be upon him: "There is no Muslim who plants a tree or sows a seed from which a bird, human, or animal eats, but that it is considered a charitable act for him" (Al-Bukhari, 2002, Hadith No. (2320) and Muslim, 1955, Hadith No. (1553)). Ibn Hajar said, "The hadith highlights the virtue of planting and cultivating and encourages the cultivation of the earth (Ibn Hajar, 1970b, vol. 5, p. 4).

This is a clear text urging the cultivation, growth, and preservation of plants for the benefit of humanity. The texts of Islamic law continue to encourage the cultivation of beneficial and useful things until the Day of Resurrection. Supporting this meaning is what Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated in his Musnad (مسند) from the hadith of Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), who said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, 'If the Day of Resurrection comes upon one of you while he has a seedling in his hand, let him plant it'" (Imam Ibn Hanbal, 2001, Hadith No. (12902)). Just as the clear texts of the Sunnah encourage the cultivation of forests, they also forbid the destruction or damage of forests. Ibn Tawus, on the authority of his father, said, 'The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade the uprooting of trees, for it protects livestock. In drought' (Al-San'ani, Abd Al-Razzaq (9378)). This hadith clearly prohibits cutting down trees where there is life and growth in them that can be used. The meaning of cutting down trees mentioned in the prophetic text is killing the tree, because green trees have life in them, just as humans and animals have existence. Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Whenever the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) sent an army of Muslims to the polytheists, he would say, 'Go in the name of Allah.'" Then he mentioned the hadith, in which it says, "Do not kill a newborn, a woman, or

an elderly person. Do not pierce a spring, and do not uproot a tree except a tree that prevents you from fighting or stands between you and the polytheists. Do not mutilate a human being or an animal, and do not commit treachery or commit adultery” (Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi, 2003, Hadith No. (18155)). If this is the case in enemy territory during war, then how about in Muslim countries? It was narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Habashi that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Whoever cuts down a lote tree, Allah will throw his head into the Fire.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1973, Hadith No. (5239)). Abu Dawud was asked about the meaning of this hadith, and he said, “This hadith is brief, meaning that whoever cuts down a lote tree in the open desert, where travelers and animals seek shade, unjustly and unjustly, without any right to do so, Allah will throw his head into the Fire.” (Abu Dawud, 1973, p. 361). Just as the explicit prophetic texts indicate the development and protection of forests, there are other texts that indicate, in their generality and meaning, the development and protection of forests. Among these texts is what Ibn Majah narrated from Ubadah ibn as-Samit (may Allah be pleased with him), who said, “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, ‘There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.’” (Ibn Majah, 1973, Hadith No. 2340). This is a general hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) forbids causing any harm. It is well known that encroachment upon forests by cutting them down or even neglecting to protect or develop them is a type of harm to the environment and its components of humans, animals, and plants. This also includes what Imam Muslim narrated from the hadith of Abdullah ibn Masoud, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, (ﷺ), said, “Allah is beautiful and loves beauty” (Narrated by Muslim, 1955, Hadith, 91). In caring for and developing forests, there is a type of beauty that does not prevent it from being included in this generality.

Second: Sharia Rules

Since the first centuries of Islam, scholars of Al-Ummah have established fixed Sharia rules to regulate many branches of religious and worldly affairs. This is what the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has adhered to in its domestic and foreign affairs. Sharia rules are derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Therefore, Sharia rules, whether jurisprudential, legal principles, or objectives-based, have contributed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's concern for environmental components in general and forests in particular. These Sharia rules have also influenced the formulation and regulation of legal texts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including the following:

Rule: Considering the Achievement of Interest

One of the general rules of Shariah is that it seeks to achieve the interests of people at all times and in all places. Interest is a benefit. Acquiring every benefit and preventing every harm is a benefit and is called interest (Al-Razi, 1995, pp. 383-384). Interest in Sharia is what achieves the Lawgiver's intent in preserving the five necessities: religion, life, reason, offspring, and wealth. Anything that brings benefit to these necessities and wards off harm is considered an interest (Al-Ghazali, 1993, vol. 1, pp. 139-140). Al-Shatibi said, "The establishment of laws is for the benefit of mankind in this immediate and future life" (Al-Shatibi, 1997a, vol. 2, p. 4). Since Sharia is concerned with the interests of mankind, both in terms of attainment and prevention, and since forests encompass the interests of mankind in both creation and removal, it is necessary that the principle of attaining benefits and warding off harms includes the development and protection of forests. From this standpoint, we find that Saudi law stipulates regulatory provisions in the Environmental Law that address forest development and protection, achieving benefits for mankind and warding off harms. Among these provisions are the following:

Article 6 of the Executive Regulations for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification stipulates:

- A. The preparation and implementation of a national plan for sustainable forest management.
- B. Identifying and allocating protected forests for the purpose of preserving, developing, or rehabilitating them, announcing them, and taking the necessary measures to protect them, including fencing and placing boundary and guidance signs. Grazing is also prohibited in the following areas:
 - a. Protected forests
 - b. Degraded forests identified by the Center
 - c. Forests identified by the Center that have not been planted or burned for less than 10 years
 - d. Forests identified by the Center that are subject to studies or research
 - e. Planted forests.

All of the provisions of the above regulations fall within the framework of achieving public benefit and preventing harm, in accordance with established principles of Islamic Sharia. Article Twelve of the Environmental Law also stipulates that "it is not permissible to own forest lands, pasture lands, national parks, wilderness, and geological lands in any manner that transfers ownership." It is also not permissible to encroach, whether by expansion or creation, on forest lands, pasture lands, national parks, wilderness, or geological lands."

Rule: Considering Consequences

Considering consequences means observing the consequences of an action after its occurrence and the resulting effects. This principle is a recognized and intended rule in Islamic law, regardless of whether the actions are permissible or prohibited. Al-Shatibi stated, "Considering the consequences of actions is regarded as a fundamental objective of Islamic law, regardless of whether the actions align with or contradict Islamic law." This is because the mujtahid does not judge an action performed by those charged with responsibility to proceed with or refrain from it, except after considering the consequences of that action. This is a challenging area for the mujtahid to navigate, yet it is aesthetically pleasing, deemed commendable, and aligns with the objectives of Islamic law (Al-Shatibi, 1997b, Vol. 5, p. 178). Therefore, Islamic law has paid attention to the means as well as the objectives and has decided to block the means through its controls - the means - that lead to current and future corruption. It has also approved the opening of the means through its controls - the prohibited means - that lead to achieving the benefit recognized by Islamic law. Since the system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on the principles and objectives of Islamic law, every system enacted or approved by the state must be governed by Islamic rules and objectives. Among these systems are those that have focused on forest development and protection. From this perspective, the Saudi lawmaker, in the Executive Regulations for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification, set specific rules for pastures in Article 7, Paragraph (7-1), which include: (The Center shall do the following: a. Preparing and implementing a national plan for pasture management.

b. Declaring a pastoral reserve for rehabilitation and sustainable management and undertaking actions such as fencing, placing boundaries or guiding signs, and implementing other protective measures.

c. Preparing and implementing an action plan for the rehabilitation of degraded pastoral reserves.

d. Developing a plan to regulate grazing based on climatic, pastoral, and other information. The plan shall specify the locations where grazing is permitted, the appropriate grazing duration, the types and numbers of grazing animals permitted, and other requirements. The regulations also prohibit grazing in the land border areas designated by the regulations and in coastal tree areas, except under the specified conditions and times. This measure aims to prevent excessive grazing and the depletion of pasture areas within regions that have vegetation cover. Among the provisions of the Regulations, which constitute an application of the principle of considering consequences, is Article 8, Paragraph (1). (8-2)- (d) The Regulations mandate the placement of awareness and warning signs in different park locations to heighten visitors' awareness. This procedure is done to preserve park components and clarify the penalties and fines that will be applied upon the expiration of the provisions of the law and regulations.

Article Sixteen of the Environmental Law stipulates the following:

1 - It is prohibited to engage in any activity or work within areas with vegetation cover without obtaining a permit or license, under the regulations.

2 - It is prohibited to engage in any activity or work within areas within the urban area that contain vegetation cover supervised by the competent authority without obtaining a permit or license, per the regulations.

Rule: Harm to be Removed

Among the legal rulings are those that are not specifically stated but are included in the general principles and evidence of the Shari'a. This is because the Shari'a encompasses everything. It is not possible to specify every issue specifically. However, there are general rules that Allah bestows upon whomever He wills among His servants, enabling them to attach particulars to the rulings of these general rules. Among these major general rules are "Harm is removed" or "There should be no harm and no reciprocating harm." This rule can include thousands of issues involving harm and thousands of issues involving harm without any specificity being specified. In this regard, we find many provisions enacted by Saudi legislators in

forest development and protection regulations that are based on this principle. For example, **Article 19** of the Environment Law stipulates that anything that may harm vegetation cover or disrupt its natural balance is prohibited, particularly the following:

1. Cutting down trees, shrubs, weeds, or plants, or uprooting or transporting them, or stripping them of their bark, leaves, or any part thereof, or transporting or raking their soil, or trading in them.
2. Leaving waste inside, burying, burning, or throwing it in places other than those designated for it by the competent authority.
3. Lighting fires inside forests in places other than those designated for that purpose by the competent authority.
4. Destroying fixed or movable structures, cutting or destroying fences placed within forests by the competent authority, or tampering with boundary or guide signs.
5. Grazing in locations and for periods prohibited by the competent authority.
6. Releasing any wild or animal species that are alien to the environment or invasive.

The environmental law stipulates that forest development and protection should be achieved while preserving individual property rights, which is the meaning of the rule, "No harm shall be inflicted."

Article 29 states, "Protected areas shall be established - by a decision of the Council of Ministers based on a proposal from the competent authority - on land not privately owned and over which no one has a right of specialization, concession, or reservation. In the event of any of these, the map of the protected area shall be amended, or an alternative shall be chosen, unless the right holder waives their right, in accordance with what is specified in the regulations."

The second paragraph of the rules for carrying out **Article 43** of the Law about improving plant life and fighting desertification says that anyone who breaks the rules must fix the problem and pay the compensation set by the Center within 60 days after being notified.

As stated in the provisions of Article Fifteen—Procedures for Disposing of Seized Items—of the Executive Regulations, it is stipulated that (resources shall be destroyed when necessary, such as invasive and alien plants. This is due to the harm their presence causes to the forest as a whole, and the harm shall be removed.

Third: Codifying regulations to protect the environment and its components in general and forests in particular.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pays great attention and care to the environment and its components in general, and forests in particular. Therefore, it has enacted regulations for everything that contributes to the development and protection of forests. Among the regulations established for this purpose is the Rangelands and Forests Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/55 dated 29/10/1425 AH (1995 CE). The National Forest Strategy and Action Plan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, was also approved by the Council of Ministers for the period 1426-1446 AH (1995 CE) pursuant to Resolution No. 306, dated 23/12/1426 AH (1995 CE). This legislation was followed by the Environment Law, issued on 10/07/2020 (1995 CE), to encompass all components of the environment. The Saudi legislature's regulatory provisions have taken into account the development and protection of forests, on the one hand, and the imposition of severe penalties on those who violate or harm forests in any way. Among the provisions of the Environmental Law is Article 12, which stipulates that it is prohibited to appropriate forest lands, pasture lands, national parks, wilderness, and geological lands in any way that transfers ownership. The second paragraph of the article also states, "it is prohibited to encroach, whether by expansion or construction, on forest lands, pasture lands, national parks, wilderness, and geological lands." The article also explicitly states the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to forest development and protection by protecting forestlands from ownership or encroachment of any kind.

The Saudi legislature has not claimed that forest lands are to be reclaimed as public lands. Rather, this was restricted by restrictions, including what was stipulated in Article 15 of the Environment Law, which stipulates that the reclamation of agricultural land and vegetation cover lands and their leveling requires obtaining a license in accordance with what is specified in the regulations. Also stipulated in Article 16, which stipulates that it is prohibited to carry out any activity or work within vegetation cover lands without obtaining a permit or license, in accordance with what is specified in the regulations.

To protect forests, the Saudi legislator explicitly stipulated in the Environment Law that any harm to forests or green vegetation, or any damage to forests in any way, whether through felling, grazing, or disrupting their appearance by leaving waste within them, is prohibited. The text of the article states that anything that would harm vegetation or disrupt their natural balance is prohibited, particularly the following:

- Cutting down, uprooting, transporting, or stripping trees, shrubs, weeds, or plants of their bark, leaves, or any part thereof, or transporting, raking, or trading in their soil.
- Leaving waste within forests, burying, burning, or dumping it in places other than those designated by the competent authority.
- Setting fires within forests in places other than those designated by the competent authority.
- Destroying fixed or movable structures, cutting or destroying fences placed within them by the competent authority, or tampering with their boundary or guiding signs.
- Grazing in locations and for periods prohibited by the competent authority.
- Releasing any invasive or exotic animal species into the environment.

The Environment Law also stipulates that "it is prohibited to produce, transport, store, sell, or promote local firewood or charcoal without obtaining a permit or license, under the regulations." The statutory provisions relating to forests were not confined to files but rather were transformed into procedures included in Vision 2030, with field actions being implemented. Examples include:

- The Ministry of Agriculture prepared executive regulations for the Environment Law to protect forests from logging violations. Vision 2030 included several projects and initiatives: Green Saudi Arabia, Green Middle East, and other forms of forest conservation.
- Cabinet Resolution No. 417, dated 19/07/1440 AH, established the National Center for Vegetation Development to oversee the management and investment of pasturelands, forests, and national parks; conserve plant genetic resources and vegetation outside protected areas in the Kingdom; and combat desertification. This center is also part of the implementation of Vision 2030 regarding forests and vegetation. In general, the center has undertaken several activities, including
 - The National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification launched patrols to protect and monitor forests and parks in the Asir Region. These patrols number more than 100, covering five locations in the region. In addition, five drones were used to monitor and detect encroachments and violations on vegetation cover, apprehend perpetrators, and take appropriate action following the executive regulations of the Environment Law.
 - The center also launched the Drought Preparedness and Mitigation Initiative in the Kingdom, which falls within the initiatives of the National Transformation Program to achieve Vision 2030. This initiative reflects the kingdom's interest and efforts to mitigate the effects of desertification and drought by expanding afforestation projects and rehabilitating degraded vegetation cover sites to achieve the goals of the Saudi Green Initiative.
- This also includes participation in World Forest Day on March 21.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the necessity of developing and protecting forests based on the general principles and concepts of Islamic law, the importance of green cover in general and forests in particular, and the attention paid by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's laws to forest development and protection. It demonstrates that the laws of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are an extension of its constitution, which is based on the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, both of which are valid for all times and places. It demonstrates that Saudi legislators have transformed legal texts into practical procedures, as evidenced by the inclusion of these legal procedures for environmental development in general, and forests in particular, in the country's Vision 2030. Vision 2030 includes several projects, including the Green Saudi Arabia Initiative and the Green Middle East Initiative. Saudi Arabia has also established centers to oversee the management and investment of pasturelands, forests, and national parks; to conserve plant genetic resources and vegetation outside protected areas in the kingdom; and to combat desertification. Saudi Arabia has launched patrols to protect and monitor forests and parks in various regions of the kingdom. The National Center is concerned with developing vegetation cover and combating desertification, as

well as with the initiative to develop capacity to prepare for and mitigate drought in Saudi Arabia as part of the National Transformation Program initiatives to achieve Vision 2030.

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