

# LINE leaf

Newsletter of the London Islamic Network for the Environment

Awareness ■ Reflection ■ Action

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*Verily, all things have we created in proportion and measure (Qur'an 54:49)*

تكريم الوحدة في التعدد  
  
 London Islamic Network  
 for the Environment

## Islamic Environmentalism: The Means and the End

■ Muzammal Hussain



As any seasoned activist will know, the goal or end, may not only take considerable time, but may in fact not be reached within a lifetime. Nonetheless, any effort to get there will always leave us with the “means” we have chosen to achieve our objective. Gandhi, perhaps, takes this even further when he says, “As the means, so the end.”

Hoping that these ideals were not out of reach, I set myself the task of starting a group called LINE (London Islamic Network for the Environment) just over three years ago.

### Social ecology

LINE campaigns for environmental justice, and in the process it also attempts to nurture social cohesion. This integrated approach, I hope, is providing a small but significant antidote to the wider tension and misunderstandings felt by certain communities. One forum within which such nurturing takes place is LINE's monthly meetings in central

London which attract a diverse, albeit small group of people.

Muslims, usually a Buddhist and Christian or two, as well as anarchists and those of no formal faith sit on chairs to form a circle and hear a small chapter from the *Qur'an* before taking a few minutes silence together. I have found that along with good facilitation, this ritual, which marks both the beginning and end of each LINE meeting, provides a taste of stillness and hence a basis for more reflective dialogue. The means by which we discuss how we can care for the natural world can also result in us better understanding one another.

Guest speakers at these meetings have included Ewa Jasiewicz who spoke on “Oil control in Iraq”, Derek Wall on “Green economics” and Usama Hasan on “Ramadan and consumerism”. Most recently we heard a talk on “Non-violence in Islam” from Abu Muntasir, of JIMAS.

### Action in flippers

LINE has also organised numerous events in the wider community which have been both creative and educational. Most eye-catching was our stunt in Brick Lane, a highly Bangladeshi area of London. Here, several of us donned a pair of snorkels and flippers to highlight that sea-level rise from climate change would hit Bangladesh particularly hard. One of my aims as the coordinator of this stunt was to also draw in participation from Muslim hijab-wearing women. With a snorkel worn on top of their garment, the social tension around it might also lighten somewhat through the comical nature of the stunt. My persuasive powers drew in two such women, and *the Guardian* also covered the story and threw in a small photo.

### Fun and funding

Like many groups, we find that it's a tough world when we need money and when we simultaneously want to ensure we keep to our principles in the long run. So far LINE has gotten by (just about!) on small donations from individuals, and despite the temptations which will keep coming our way, this kind of financial basis is one that I hope we will remain strong enough to keep. Deep dialogue, comical eco-stunts and thinking about who funds us... if that's part of Islamic environmentalism, then keep me in!

The above article is a version of one which first appeared in *Peace News* (Sept 2007).  
 Website: [www.peacenews.info](http://www.peacenews.info)

## Monthly Forum Join US!



Photo Credit: Alan Pegg

LINE meets usually on the second Sunday of each month at the Muslim World League in London, and visitors and new members are very welcome. Our forums are fun, engaging and like all of our activities there is an emphasis on the process, or means, by which we pursue our objectives. The format of these forums looks something like this: In the first half, we hear our speaker talk on a specific topic and we then have an open discussion. In the second half we hear feedback on recent events, and we may also begin planning new ones. At the end of each forum there is the option of a trip to a local cafe.

### Dates of upcoming forums:

Sun Oct 21<sup>st</sup>

(3rd Sunday of Oct to avoid Eid weekend);

Sun Nov 11<sup>th</sup>;

Sun Dec 9<sup>th</sup>;

Start time: 2.15pm;

Finish time: 4.45pm

Please also see our website for up-to-date information  
[www.lineonweb.org.uk](http://www.lineonweb.org.uk)

# Climate Change: Journey of a Muslim

■ Elizabeth Chawdhary

On Sunday 13th May 2007, I left home for the 'Campaign Against Climate Change' conference at LSE (London School of Economics) feeling excited, but also very unprepared. I felt I didn't know enough about climate change or Islam to be facilitating a small group discussion at the LINE workshop, titled 'Climate Change & Muslims: Developing a Grassroots Movement'.

## Discovery through questioning

I calmed myself by remembering

that this event was more about discovering ideas for practical actions, and less about discussing theories and facts on climate change. It would begin with

four speakers stimulating us with a five-minute talk each, and then the participants – LINE regulars and anyone else who chose to attend this particular workshop – would speak in their small groups, focussing on answering specific, connected questions.

These four questions were:

1. What is the Muslim Community doing on Climate Change?
2. What does the Muslim Community need to be doing (if anything)?
3. What obstacles are in the way (if any)? &
4. What can we (in the room) do now to help overcome these obstacles?

Each person was allocated a one-minute slot to concisely express their answer to each question. Groups then took turns to feedback to the main assembly.

## Time to go round

Half my group was Muslim, and half non-Muslim. Whilst we did not know each other, everyone responded enthusiastically and one person volunteered to take notes. As we went round, everyone was able to talk about what Muslims *are* doing on cli-

mate change, though it also became clear that each person had their own unique perspective, having engaged with Muslims from different communities.

Most challenging, however, was making suggestions for what Muslims *need* to be doing, and *strategies* for overcoming obstacles in the way of this. Here, our one-minute limit helped us to stay focussed on strategies, rather than go into issues, and it also encouraged us to stay positive. For example, we often accompanied sugges-

tions with, "I don't know if that would

work", but we did not waste time elaborating on what, or why, we

didn't know; rather these recognitions of uncertainty provided

us with encouragement to try out

embryonic ideas.

## Road to empowerment

By the end of the workshop, the obstacle that resonated most for me was that whilst many Muslims are taught Arabic pronunciation of the *Qur'an*, they do not know its many references to the environment. Consequently, I became determined to start learning English translations of these verses, so I could pass on this knowledge to others. Fortunately, since then, in reading Muzammal Hussain's paper, "Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives & Engagement", I have discovered not only many citations, but also compelling reasoning from an Islamic perspective for action on climate change. A few months later, and I now feel confident enough to devise and deliver LINE workshops on the environment to community groups.

The 'Campaign against Climate Change' website is:  
<http://www.campaigncc.org>

Muzammal Hussain's paper, "Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives & Engagement" is available for downloading on the LINE website:  
<http://www.lineonweb.org.uk/Resources/reading>

## Food Tips

Choosing our food with care can not only benefit our own health and that of the wider environment, but it can also strengthen communities. Some options that could potentially contribute to these wide ranging benefits are:

1. Choosing organic food from a local food store, rather than the supermarket.
2. Joining a local organic box delivery scheme, and having organic fruit and/or vegetables delivered direct to our door.
3. Buying from a local farmers market.

### Websites:

- Find a local organic box delivery scheme: [www.alotoforganics.co.uk/cats/food.php](http://www.alotoforganics.co.uk/cats/food.php)
- Find a farmers market near you: [www.lfm.org.uk](http://www.lfm.org.uk) (London only)

# To The Mosque, But How?

■ Hassan Khabbaze

“In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful”

How can the *Hadith* (sayings & traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) empower us to tackle climate change?

Islam is a complete way of life that offers guidance to humankind through the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*. In addition to the many *ayahs* (verses) from the glorious *Qur'an*, there are many *Hadith* that refer directly to our duty to be *khalifah* (viceroys) of the earth God has blessed us with, and respect the *mizan* (balance) that He has established in the environment. By drawing upon this guidance, Moslems could, through their example, take a lead in combating climate change, and in doing so strengthen their *taqwa* (piety).

## What the Prophet said

In an authentic *Hadith* translated from Sahih Moslem by Dr. A. H. Halimah in his book *The Wisdom of the Prophet Muhammad* (PBUH), Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

“Every step made by a person who performs their ablution and walks to the mosque to perform their prayers will wipe out a sin of theirs and raise them a degree on the scale of good deeds.”

## Reality of experience

Regrettably, from my own experience as a Moslem when going to the mosque to pray, especially on Fridays and during the holy month of Ramadan, there is the predicted confusion, congestion and traffic jams caused by worshippers battling to park their cars as near to the mosque as possible.

When the prayers have concluded, this is followed by complaints from the mosque's neighbours about blocked driveways, and confrontations with traffic wardens who are simply doing their job.

**"At the same time, walking would give us the opportunity... to admire and appreciate God's beautiful creation around us"**

## Health, environment & beauty

Let's heed the advice left to us by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who encouraged us to walk\*. This would not only solve the problems caused by our reliance on the car, but would also improve our health and reduce the harmful CO2 emissions that cars release into the environment. If the distance between our home and destination is too great, then we could try taking public transport for part of the journey and walk for the remaining part. At the same time, walking would give us the opportunity, time, and space to admire and appreciate God's beautiful creation around us.

\* For some people, such as those with certain disabilities, walking may not be possible. This statement is thus not meant to be inclusive of this, as well as other groups, who may have a genuine obstacle preventing them from walking, either temporarily or permanently.

## Web Stuff

Our website has up-to-date information on our events, monthly forums and campaigns. There is also a comprehensive background account on Islamic environmentalism in the UK, as well as literature you can download on Islam, ecology, climate change, and more. Recently we collaborated with the World Development Movement (WDM) to produce a 2-sided briefing titled 'Climate Change and the Muslim World', which you can also easily find and download.

[www.lineonweb.org.uk](http://www.lineonweb.org.uk)

## Recent Activities

Over the last few months we've done lots of stuff in lots of places! We were represented on the panel at the JIMAS international da'wah conference called 'Healing the Fragile Earth', in Leicester during the summer; One of our members coordinated a day outing plus organic/halal picnic at a caravan park in Surrey; We've delivered loads of talks inside and outside London, including in both Wales and France; And last but not least, we organised our first 'Islam & Environment Training Day' in partnership with Friends of the Earth and Tawhid Mosque, which took place in June in central London.

At our monthly forums, we've had the honour of listening to numerous speakers talking on a diverse range of topics.

For Example:

- Abu Muntasir (JIMAS) on 'Non-Violence in Islam;
- Larry Lohmann (The Corner House) on "'Offsetting" Carbon Emissions: Does it Help, or Does it Hurt?";
- A special event in May, 'Climate Change & Muslims': Developing a Grassroots Movement', with Usama Hasan (Tawhid Mosque), James O'Nions (WDM), Muzammal Hussain (LINE) & Masood Yousef (WELCOME);
- Stephen Watson (Powerswitch) on 'Peak Oil: "It's the Future but not as we know it"";
- Ewa Jasiewicz (PLATFORM) on 'Iraq: The Oil Control Agenda & Grassroots Resistance'.
- We also held an open forum inviting participants to bring and read out poems of their choosing, on ecology &/or Islam.

## Receive Email Updates!

### LINE E-List

Do you know that you can stay updated with LINE activities on email? Just look for the link on the upper left hand side of our website ([www.lineonweb.org.uk](http://www.lineonweb.org.uk)), and you'll be taken to the easy to follow instructions for subscribing.

*[Please note: To prevent anyone receiving unwanted emails, only those who subscribe to our list are added to it. Also, we have a strict policy of not passing your email address to any third party unless agreed by you in advance. This means that you shouldn't receive any spam through us.]*

### Ecobites

There is also an elist called Ecobites which you may like to subscribe to. Although not a LINE list, this is UK-wide and would be relevant to anyone interested in Islamic environmentalism in the UK.

The easiest way to subscribe is by sending a blank email to:

[Ecobites-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:Ecobites-subscribe@yahoo.com)

You will then get a return email asking you to confirm your intention to subscribe. The easiest confirmation option is the one in which you simply reply to the email.

## Upcoming Events

### 'Climate Change & Islam: A Visual Journey'

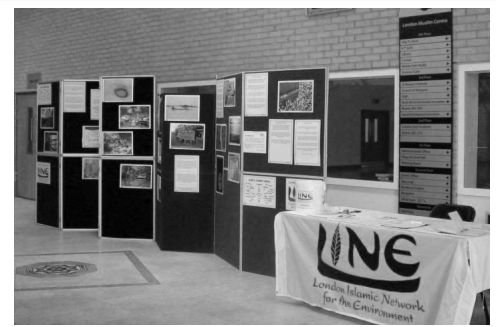


Photo Credit: Elizabeth Chawdhary

Over a good part of this year, one of our members spent many hours labouring away to put together a visual exhibition focussing on 'climate change & Islam'.

We are delighted to announce that this exhibition is now complete and comprises a selection of high quality photographs capturing climate change in different parts of the globe, including in a number of predominantly Muslim countries. It also includes visual ideas on climate change solutions, and an exploration of what Islam says about the pressing challenge we face. So far we've displayed our exhibition at the Mile End Fair, and also at the London Muslim Centre. If you'd like to discuss having our photo exhibition displayed at your mosque or other appropriate venue/community event then please get in touch!

### Global Day of Climate Action: Sat Dec 8th



Photo Credit: Jamil Aslam

The 'Campaign against Climate Change' (CCC) has pioneered mass street demonstrations on climate change. Since 2005, LINE has spearheaded the mobilisation effort on behalf of the UK Muslim community at these events, and is planning to mobilise again for the next one on **Saturday Dec 8th** in central London. We hope you can join us! [CCC Website: [www.campaignccc.org](http://www.campaignccc.org)]

For an up-to-date list of all our events, please visit our website.

## We Need Your Help!

LINE was established in 2004 and quickly established itself as a respected grassroots network. Our work has grown beyond expectation, and we are now in almost constant demand. To maintain high standards, we depend on help from reliable volunteers, as well as financial support. If you feel the urge to help us, please get in touch. In particular, we desperately need more people to commit to regular standing orders to fund our work. This would be of tremendous value in enabling us to further develop our group and to reach a wider range of people with our educational and campaigning activities. If you would like to support us in this way, please visit the following webpage which contains the simple instructions you'll need to set a standing order up:

[www.lineonweb.org.uk/Finance/donate](http://www.lineonweb.org.uk/Finance/donate)

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### Disclaimer

The views found in articles published in *LINE Leaf* should be viewed as being of those of the author at the time of writing, and are not necessarily formally held by LINE.