

The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin

Huda Alkaff is the Founder and Director of the [Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin](#), President of [Wisconsin Interfaith Power & Light](#) and Vice Chair of the [Interfaith Earth Network](#), a program of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee.

The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin, a state-wide volunteer group that was formed in 2005, intends to educate its members, the Muslim community and the general public about the Islamic environmental teachings, to apply these teachings in daily life and to form coalitions with the interfaith environmental organizations in Wisconsin working toward a just, peaceful and sustainable future. Its primary two Islamic sources are the Qur'an (the holy book for Muslims) and the Hadith (Reports on the sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad – PBUH-). <http://islamicenvironmentalgroup.org/>

We organize environmental workshops for Muslim families/households/individuals. Participating individuals and families learn and explore ways to apply the Islamic environmental and stewardship teachings in their daily lives, reduce waste, conserve energy and water, eat healthier foods, and together build a stronger sense of community.

We have activities throughout the year, designating a theme for each month, January: Networking; February: Global Warming/Climate Change, March: Water; April: Wisconsin Interfaith Earth Month; May: Certified Organic Fair Trade; June-August: Community Vegetable Garden; as well as Green Ramadan; September: Peace; October: Wisconsin Interfaith Energy Awareness Month; November: Recycling; December: Environmental Justice.

The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin collaborates with [Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light](#) in the following programs:

- Interfaith TelePrayer for Earth / Climate Change. The 5th Interfaith TelePrayer took place in July 29, 2013. <http://wisconsinipl.org/interfaithteleprayer.htm>
- Preach-In on Climate Change, February-April. <http://wisconsinipl.org/preachinonclimatechange.htm>
- Interfaith Earth Month Poster Contest, April. More than 650 K-12 students participated during the years 2005-Present. <http://www.wisconsinipl.org/posterwinners.htm>
- Interfaith Energy Awareness Month, October. Over the years 2007-Present, we successfully prevented 1,468,962 pounds (734 tons) of greenhouse gas emissions. The main activity sponsored by the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin was: *“Combating Global Warming and Poverty by Distributing Free Energy Star LED Lights to the Poor and Needy.”* <http://www.wisconsinipl.org/awards.htm>

Recycling Month in November is one of our popular programs: Over the years 2008-Present, the Muslim community recycled more than 4,000 plastic shopping and grocery bags and above 2,000 newspapers and office paper!! The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin distributed hundreds of reusable shopping bags made of recycled and recyclable materials, hundreds of pencils made of recycled newspaper, and hundreds of pens made of recycled plastic bottles to the community.

Another successful activity is the community vegetable gardens at different locations and in collaboration with several Mosques in Wisconsin. A large amount of fresh produce is donated to the local food pantries.

These days, Muslims are celebrating Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, in which Muslims, who are able, abstain from food and drink (including water) from dawn till sunset. The main purpose of the fasting is to become more aware of and sensitive to the plight of the poor, hungry, and thirsty. Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an, the holy book for Muslims, was revealed to Prophet Mohamed (PBUH). It is a month of reflection, contemplation, repentance, renewal, spiritual purification and rejuvenation.

In the Qur'an (2:183), God says, "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) God-consciousness (Taqwa)."

On July 11 and 14, 2013, the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin organized two community conversation events "Communities of Peace, Justice and Sustainability" with the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice's outreach team. On [July 11, 2013](#), the event was held at the Urban Ecology Center-Riverside Park in Milwaukee in collaboration with the [Interfaith Earth Network](#), and the [July 14, 2013](#) event took place at the Islamic Society of Milwaukee. Both events were part of "[Power Down](#)" and "Green Ramadan."

We consider environmental justice, the right for clean air, pure water, healthy food, good sanitation, etc., as a human rights issue. Our major goal is to work with others to make environmental justice a reality for all.

Justice is the basis of all human relations and a foundation of Islamic rule. There is one word that captures the essence of all Islamic laws and all Islamic teachings; one word that describes the overriding value that permeates all Islamic values. **Justice**. God says in the Qur'an (57:25): "We sent aforetime our messengers with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that humans may stand forth in Justice."

In the Qur'an (15:19), God says, "And the earth We have spread out; set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance." In the Qur'an (55:7-9), "...and God has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance." And another verse from the Qur'an (3:108), "These are the Signs of God: We rehearse them to thee in Truth: And God means no injustice to **any** of His creatures".

Ramadan is a powerful transformative experience. During this holy month of Ramadan, we can transform our lives and move away from a consumption focused life to a life of moderation. It is the time to reflect on our wants and what we really need to live a peaceful, simple life on this earth.

I pray that we reduce our ecological footprint on Earth and use Ramadan's spiritual experience as an opportunity to reflect on our own lives and move away from the materialistic culture and the waste it leaves behind.

It is the ideal time to put into practice the Islamic environmental teachings to care for Earth and all its inhabitants and to stand up for environmental justice, climate justice, clean air, clean water, healthy food, sanitation for all as a basic human rights and creation rights issue.

Help us God to do good work to keep Earth balanced, just, peaceful and sustainable for all. Amen.