

# Islamic Ethics in Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage: A Fatwa Perspective of the Indonesian Ulema Council

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## Abstract

The garbage problem in the human settlements in Indonesia is deteriorating. It is due to people's behavior induced by a lack of understanding and socio-economic situations. Littering persists among the Indonesian cities and villages alike despite the Indonesian government's efforts to fight trash. The Indonesian Ulema Council published the Fatwa No. 41/2014 on trash Management to Prevent Environmental Damage in response to the trash crisis. Using Islamic ethical norms, the Indonesian Ulema Council emphasizes environmental preservation as a form of devotion and faith in Allah SWT. This study investigates the Fatwa policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council in waste management from the standpoint of Islamic ethics to prevent environmental damage across all settlements: urban and rural.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review. Data is collected through literature such as the Quran, Fatwas and books. Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drafting are the techniques used in data analysis.

The findings reveal that Islamic ethics emphasize the necessity of environmental preservation and being ethical, when interacting with the environment. The significance of theology-based waste management as a technique stems from the concept that waste management is a command from Allah and His Messenger. Furthermore, Fatwa Number 41 of 2014 on Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council is directed by Islamic law on Israf and Tabdzir. Indonesian Ulema Council Fatwa on trash management has had a limited impact on waste reduction in Indonesia. This circumstance also demonstrates that Indonesia, despite having a Muslim majority, does not directly influence Muslims to follow the Islamic law.

**Keywords:** Islamic Ethics, Waste Management, Fatwa Perspective

## Introduction

Waste is a significant problem in Indonesia. It is estimated that Indonesia produces more than 64 million tons of waste each year (Wachid & Caesar, 2021). Uncontrolled landfilling can cause various problems. Waste management systems can become more efficient. So far, the

government, private organizations, and communities have worked together to control waste (Addahlawi et al., 2019). The Indonesian government still faces many challenges in implementing the waste management system, including limited access to services, low public awareness of the importance of cleanliness and health, lack of commitment from the local governments, poor waste management, and lack of human resources (Ridho et al., 2023; Hendra, 2016).

According to Suryani & Ningsih (2018), the increase in waste in Indonesia is influenced by human behavior of improper waste disposal. Most of the waste generated comes from households, which accounts for 37.3% of the total waste (Lindawati et al., 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2023). To solve the waste problem in Indonesia, it is crucial to increase people's knowledge about the need for proper waste management (Prabowo, 2017). Moreover, the leading causes that can increase the waste problem in Indonesia are the lack of awareness from each family and the socio-economic conditions of the community that can affect food waste (Romeo et al., 2021). In addition, attitudes and the availability of facilities are essential aspects of overcoming the waste problem in Indonesia (Hasanah et al., 2021).

To solve the waste problem in Indonesia, the government issued Law No. 18/2008 on Waste Management, which includes rules that prohibit littering and provide sanctions for litterers through separate Regional Regulations (Rendy, 2018). The Indonesian government's efforts to combat waste are considered unsuccessful as littering still occurs in many Indonesian communities, especially in urban and rural areas (Nurhidayati, 2014; Erlyani, 2018; Ridho et al., 2023).

It is known that Islam upholds Islamic ethics, which refer to the values and principles that guide the behavior of Muslims in daily life, including communication, trade, and personal behavior, which adhere to the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Thamrin et al., 2023). Islamic ethics seeks to shape morality and increase awareness and responsibility to develop good character (Novita, 2023; Dalimunthe et al., 2023). Individual morality can be improved by applying Islamic ethics to each individual, such as honesty, justice, fairness, and obedience as rules in human behavior (Susanto, 2016). Moreover, Islamic ethics emphasize the importance of protecting the environment and managing waste sustainably. Islamic ethics in behavior toward environmental health teaches that the natural environment is neutral and good in itself (Omar et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) participates in protecting natural resources and the environment based on the phenomenon of waste problems in Indonesia (Technologyindonesia.com, 2023). MUI emphasizes the need to preserve the environment as a form of worship to Allah SWT and a form of faith in Allah SWT by applying one of the Islamic ethical standards (Salasabila et al., 2021; Muis et al., 2009). MUI's assistance in solving the waste problem includes issuing Fatwa Number 41 of 2014 concerning Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage. MUI's Fatwa is a decision or opinion issued by a mufti or expert in a particular issue that provides guidance on a particular issue and serves as a guideline for Muslims in Indonesia (Yuliana et al., 2022). Fatwas are issued based on the interpretation of Islamic texts and the application of Islamic law to social, economic, and political situations, as well as religious activities and ceremonies (Agustin, 2017; Ni'am Sholeh, 2012; Ode et al., 2023).

The waste problem has become a national problem that harms social, economic, health, and environmental life. According to the Fatwa, humans were created by Allah SWT as Khalifah on earth (Khalifah fi al-ardl) to fulfill the mandate and obligation to prosper the world. In addition, the MUI sees an alarming trend of increasing environmental pollution driven by the need for public and industrial awareness of waste management. MUI delivered a Fatwa to limit waste through waste management activities. The Fatwa advises all Indonesians to keep the environment clean, utilize commodities appropriately, prevent littering, and provide recommendations to the government on waste management to avoid harm to living beings. This study aims to investigate the Fatwa policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council in waste management from the standpoint of Islamic ethics to prevent environmental damage.

## Theoretical Framework

Islamic ethics, waste management, and the Indonesian Ulema Council are interconnected concepts that can be explored through theory. Idllalene (2021) explains that Islamic Ethics is based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijma (consensus of Muslim scholars), and other sources of Islamic law (Idllalene, 2021). It emphasizes the importance of environmental preservation and protection of nature, as seen in the Fatwa on waste management. Furthermore, Mangunjaya and Praharawati (2019) explain that waste management is an essential aspect of environmental preservation, as it can help reduce the negative impact of waste on the environment and public health. In the context of Islamic ethics, waste management can be seen as a way to fulfill Islamic principles in maintaining ecosystem balance.

Furthermore, Hanafi et al. (2023) show that Fatwa is a non-binding legal opinion issued by scholars, while the Ulema Council is a body consisting of scholars who guide in religious matters. In the context of waste management, the Ulema Council can issue Fatwas to guide how to manage waste by Islamic ethics. For example, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has issued a Fatwa on waste management (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). Meanwhile, Yandri et al. (2023) point out that community-based waste management could be a practical application of Islamic ethics and waste management principles.

For example, the concept of "*Almsgiving Trash*" has been proposed as a community-based waste management system that combines the principles of Islamic ethics and waste management. Thus, Islamic ethics, waste management, and the Ulema Council are interconnected concepts that can be explored through the development of a community-based waste management system that is aligned with Islamic ethics and principles. The Ulema Council can issue Fatwas to provide guidance on waste management in line with the Islamic ethics, and a community-based waste management system can be a practical application of these principles (Ode et al., 2023).

## Literature Review

Previous studies explore the relationship between ethics and Islam. Da'wah Al-Qur'aniyah is the foundation of values in environmentally friendly theology. It is the essence of a believer in the belief that Allah SWT is the creator of Nature and that caring for the environment is part of the faith (Affandi et al., 2022). Tasawwuf teaches environmental ethics, and the environment serves as a verse, material for reflection, and forms human morals towards the environment (Lutfauziah et al., 2022). Elmanzlawi (2021) and Nasution et al. (2023) using the Qur'an say that many verses discuss environmental ethics and physical, social, economic, and political responsibilities. In addition, pro-environmental codes of conduct are also found in several verses in the Qur'an and Hadith (Islam et al., 2022).

Islam teaches that human beings are caliphs on earth, and this concept emphasizes the responsibility of the people to care for and protect the environment (Rakhmat, 2022). Another study says Islamic environmental ethics based on epistemological foundations related to the concepts of Haram and Hima, which refer to the prohibition of damaging the environment and protecting natural resources (Hayat et al., 2023). Affandi et al. (2022) also show that Islamic environmental ethics is based on divine revelation, including the teachings of the Qur'an and the words of the Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, Islamic teachings encourage people to avoid excessive and wasteful consumption (Omar et al., 2018). Islamic ethics also introduces waste management practices that include proper waste disposal, recycling, and minimizing the impact of waste on the environment (Samori et al., 2017).

Islamic ethics guides individuals to make ethical choices in their daily lives, including how they handle waste (Izza & Tarmidzi, 2018). They emphasize waste management, which is beneficial for the welfare of human resources (Wulandari, 2019). Applying Islamic ethics to sustainable development is beneficial to help preserve the environment and ensure that resources are used sustainably (Gulzar et al., 2021). Islamic ethics emphasizes the principles that guide our actions, including our interactions with nature (Bsoul et al., 2022). Previous studies have assessed the usefulness of Sufism values in preserving the environment by applying the values

of unity of existence, harmonization of relationships between God, nature, and humans, and ethics based on divinity and noble values (Salahudin, 2021).

## Research Methods

This study investigates the Fatwa policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council in waste management from the standpoint of Islamic ethics to prevent environmental damage. It employs a qualitative approach involving a literature study. Data was collected through literature such as the Quran, Fatwas, books, and journals. The policy analysis is a way to understand how and why the Indonesian Ulema Council enacts various policies and their ramifications. This analysis includes establishing the 'ideal' solution, focusing on the interaction of policy actors in policymaking, investigating the framing and portrayal of problems, and how policies reflect the social construction of the 'problems' (Browne et al., 2019). Data analysis approaches were employed for data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016).

## Results and Discussions

### Ethics and Islam

Islam views the importance of ethics in daily life as ethics and morals are essential to Islamic education. Islamic values can be integrated with problem-based learning to strengthen people's involvement in environmental issues and improve their understanding of environmental problems (Idris et al., 2022). The central role of Divine ethics, particularly Islamic ethics, is to provide universal and absolute moral obligations, which can save humanity from the dangers of ethical relativism and moral bankruptcy (Harris, 2021). In Islamic education, educational ethics is called moral education, which aims to form a complete Muslim personality, namely the personality of *insan kamil* (Kamal & Ma'rufah, 2019).

Islamic ethics' main principles include justice, compassion, honesty, humility, and respect for human dignity. Islamic ethics also emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's obligations towards God and other humans. Applying Islamic ethics in various aspects of life is crucial to realizing a just and harmonious society (Mahfud, 2018; Mulyasana, 2019). The concept of Islamic ethics can be applied in daily life in various ways, including promoting the values of honesty, justice, and compassion in interacting with fellow humans, maintaining good manners in speaking, dressing, and behaving, maintaining good relationships with family, neighbors, and the surrounding community, protecting the environment by not destroying nature and disposing of garbage in its place, maintaining health by consuming halal food and maintaining personal hygiene, maintaining trust and trustworthiness in business and work, maintaining a relationship with Allah SWT by worshiping and obeying His commands which by applying the concept of Islamic ethics in everyday life, is expected to create a better and harmonious society (Mahfud, 2018; Fitriani et al., 2021).

Islam teaches its followers to be ethical in all aspects of life, including the environment. This research wants to relate the application of Islamic ethics in preserving the environment. The Quran emphasizes preserving the environment and resources to benefit all living things (Harahap, 2015). Islam teaches that humans are responsible for protecting the environment and should not utilize it for their benefit (Muslim, 2017). The concept of environmental education in Islam is to instill a sense of responsibility and respect for the environment in individuals (Yamin et al., 2022). Overall, Islam emphasizes the importance of preserving the environment and being ethical in interacting with the environment. By following Islamic ethical principles relating to protecting the environment, individuals can help create a more sustainable and harmonious world.

### Theology-based Waste Management

Theology-based waste management is a technique based on religious views and values influenced by religious beliefs and principles. This shows that waste management should be done with the belief that taking care of waste is an order from Allah and His Messenger. According to the character approach, caring for waste is an excellent character trait and an intrinsic aspect of religious ideas. The social approach raises awareness that waste must be cared

for but addressed with integrated cooperation (Sukiati, 2020). The Islamic values in protecting the destruction of nature can be seen in the Qur'an Surah (QS) as follows:

"Remember when your Lord said to the Angels: "Surely I will make a caliph on the earth." They said: "Why do you intend to make on the earth one who will make mischief and shed blood while we praise and purify you?" God said: "I know what you do not know."

QS. Al Baqarah: 30

One of the verses in the Qur'an explains that God entrusts humans to be the Khalifah of God on earth to uphold His provisions and carry out His commands. Humans are created as the most perfect creatures and have reason. The construction of the Qur'an provides solutions to ways of obtaining knowledge, namely by scientific methods, realistic, away from theoretical debates and hypotheses that cause differences in thought and understanding. As a guide to human life, the Qur'an will lead to achieving goodness in this world and the hereafter (Abdullah, 2018).

The Qur'an is used as a guide to life by Muslims always to be a good person and have a good quality of life. The Qur'an contains teachings on morality and ethics that can help Muslims develop a solid moral character. This can help them become more compassionate, honest, and responsible individuals. As a guide to life, the Qur'an discusses human life and its prohibitions and taking care of all His creations. The Qur'anic verses explain that nature is subdued for the benefit of humanity, commanding to do good and forbidding to do earth damage.

"And do unto others as Allah has done unto you, and do not cause mischief on the earth, for Allah loves not those who cause mischief."

QS. Al-Qashash, 28:77.

The verse above explains that the Word of Allah SWT describes everyone as doing good to other humans and protecting all His creations. The objects referred to in the verse above include the environment, property, living things, and oneself. Based on Quraish Shihab's interpretation of the verse, "Make some of the wealth and bounty that Allah gives you in the way of Allah and practice for the life of the hereafter. Do not prevent yourself from enjoying something halal in the world. Do good to the servants of Allah as Allah has done well to you by bestowing His favors. And do not corrupt the earth by exceeding the limits of Allah. Verily, Allah has no pleasure in those who cause mischief by their misdeeds." (Quraish Shihab, 1992).

Based on several verses of the Qur'an that explain the need for all human beings to maintain human relations and protect His creation, meaning the Qur'an. This research discusses and relates the waste problem to how Islamic ethics affect theology-based waste management. To strengthen the researcher's argument, the researcher tries to dig back through the hadith that explains the importance of managing waste to protect the earth from damage and avoid the loss of humanity caused by damage.

"Verily, Allah Ta'ala is good (and) loves goodness, clean (and) loves cleanliness, noble (and) loves honour, good (and) loves beauty. Therefore, clean up your neighbourhood."

HR. Tirmidzi

The above Hadith explains the importance of humans maintaining cleanliness on earth. Emphasis on the importance of preserving the environment and ensuring the welfare of society and waste management is seen as an essential aspect. Islamic laws and regulations must carry out waste management to ensure environmental protection and community welfare (Pratama, 2015).

After explaining the relationship between waste management and the Qur'an and Hadith, researchers tried to examine theology-based waste management. Theology-based waste management uses various beliefs that waste management should be approached with the belief that paying attention to waste should be based on the belief that it is all on the orders of Allah

and His Messenger. Other waste management approaches may focus on different aspects, such as recycling, composting, or waste reduction. It may also be based on principles such as environmental sustainability or economic efficiency. By promoting awareness and cooperation, theology-based waste management can help reduce waste and its environmental impact. Ultimately, this study aims to explain that religious or theological beliefs can be used to guide waste management strategies in Indonesia.

### **Implications of the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council on Waste Management**

Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa is a guideline issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council, which is a formal institution within the Muslim Ummah that has the highest authority to determine sharia rules in every field of Muamalah either due to polemics within the Muslim Ummah or on its initiative (Ansori & Ulumuddin, 2020). MUI Fatwa is not legally binding in Indonesia, but it significantly influences the Muslim community (Mun'im, 2021; Rahvy & Ridlo, 2021). The enforcement of MUI Fatwas is mainly through social pressure and religious authority. Islamic organizations, government agencies, and the general public often reference the Fatwas in making decisions about Islamic practices and beliefs (Rahvy & Ridlo, 2021). The Indonesian government has also used MUI Fatwas as the basis for drafting laws and regulations related to Islamic issues (Mun'im, 2021). However, the position of the MUI and its Fatwa commission in constitutional law needs to be explicitly defined, and its authority and name need to be adequately recognized in the constitution (Kumkelo, 2010).

Based on data obtained from SIPSN, the most significant type of waste in Indonesia in 2022 is food waste, which is 40.8% of the total waste problem in Indonesia; 65.71% (13.9 million tonnes) can be managed, while the remaining 34.29% (7.2 million tonnes) has not been appropriately managed (). This shows that the most significant waste in Indonesia is generated due to human behavior. Seeing the waste problem, MUI issued a Fatwa that became the basis and guidance for Muslims to manage waste. MUI Fatwa Number 41 of 2014 on Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage explains the importance of humans in preserving the environment for the benefit of humanity. The Fatwa was issued to become a guideline for humans, especially Muslims, in carrying out Islamic law relating to waste management based on the Qur'an and Hadith. For this reason, this research wants to discuss the implications of MUI's Fatwa in waste management in Indonesia.

"There is corruption on land and in the sea because of the deeds of men, so that Allah may taste to them some of the consequences of their deeds, that they may return to the right path.

QS. Al-Rum, 41:30

The verse explains the punishment for damaging the environment. In the MUI Fatwa on waste management, it is explained that this verse is intended to emphasize that nature is subdued for the benefit of humans, commanding them to do good and forbidding them to damage the earth. In addition, the MUI Fatwa also explains the Islamic law on Israf and Tabdzir.

"Verily, the spendthrifts are the brothers of the devil, and the devil is a great denier of his Lord... (QS. Al-'Isra'17: 27). "... And do not be extravagant. Verily, Allah does not like those who exaggerate."

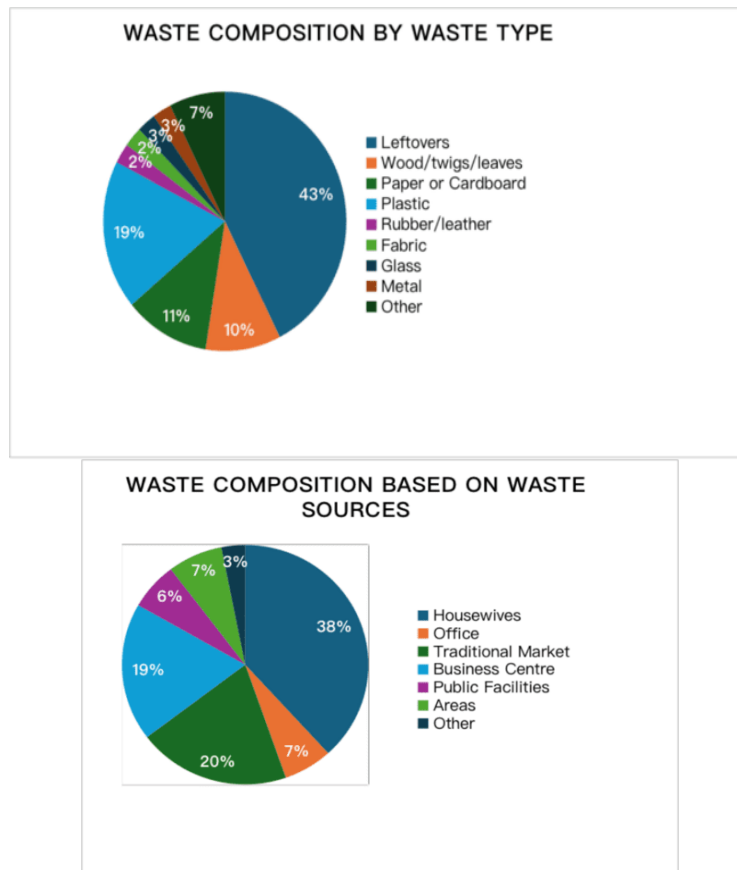
MUI's Fatwa on waste management discusses Israf and Tabdzir legislation. Israf is an act of excess, defined as using goods/assets beyond their needs. In contrast, Tabdzir wastes goods/assets that can still be used according to Sharia provisions or ordinary societal practices. According to MUI Fatwa No. 41/2014 on waste management, every Muslim must preserve environmental cleanliness, repurpose used things, and avoid different diseases and actions of Tabdzir and Israf. The emphasis on waste management through attempts to convert garbage into valuable items to improve people's welfare is *Wajib Kifayah*, and littering is *haram*.

**Table 1:** Performance Outcomes of Reducing and Handling Household Waste and Waste Similar to Household Waste.

Source: Sipsn.menlhk.go.id, 2023

No.	Waste Type	Amount (ton/year)
1	Waste Generation	17,027,843,29 ton/year
2	Waste Reduction	2,747,737,30 ton/year
3	Waste Handling	8,617,333,66 ton/year
4	Managed Waste	11,365,070,96 ton/year
5	Unmanaged Waste	5,662,772,33 ton/year

Concerns about Indonesia's performance in minimizing and managing domestic and similar garbage have been raised. Table 1 displays waste generation (16,993,373.06 tons/year), waste reduction (16.14%), 2,742,479.13 tons/year, waste management (50.58%), 8,595,819.62 tons/year, managed waste (66.72%), 11,338,298.75 tons/year, and unmanaged garbage (33.28%), 5,655,074.31 tons/year. This study demonstrates that waste management rules, economic variables, and community behavior are critical in assessing the success of waste management strategies in Indonesia. With Muslims constituting most of Indonesia's population, it is predicted that MUI Fatwa No. 41/2014 on Waste Management will persuade Indonesians not to litter.

**Fig. 1:** Waste Composition Graph (1) by Waste Type and the (2) by Waste Source for the year 2023. Source: Sipsn.menlhk.go.id, 2023

The graphs showing trash composition by waste type typically divide waste into parts based on physical properties. For example, high-income countries generate less food waste and green garbage (32% of total waste) and more dry, recyclable waste (51% of total waste) (Worldbank.org, 2023). The graph in Figure 1 aids in understanding the various types of trash produced and can be used to design targeted waste management and recycling strategies for

Indonesia. The graph is divided into food waste, plastic, paper, glass, and metal. Figure 1 shows that food waste accounts for the most waste (43%), followed by plastic (19%) and paper or cardboard (11%).

Figure 1 also demonstrates that residential garbage (38.2%), traditional markets (20%), and commercial centers (18.6%) account for the majority of waste generation in Indonesia. The majority of the waste demonstrates that people's failure to dispose of rubbish in its proper location significantly impacts Indonesia's high waste rate. Finally, our findings show that implementing MUI Fatwa on waste management has little effect on trash reduction in Indonesia. MUI Fatwa is issued based on observation and weighing of occurrences, and it serves as a guideline for humans, particularly Muslims, in their everyday lives. MUI Fatwa No. 41/2014 on Waste Management, on the other hand, now solely applies to the actions of Israf and Tabdzir. This occurrence is supported by the author's 2023 data, implying that the MUI's waste management Fatwa, which has existed for nine years, does not affect Muslim behavior in terms of waste reduction. This episode also demonstrates that the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) cannot directly encourage Muslims to observe Islamic law even though the population is predominantly Muslim.

## Conclusions

The findings show that Islamic ethics emphasizes the importance of preserving the environment and being ethical in interacting with the environment. By following the principles of Islamic ethics relating to protecting the environment, individuals can help create a more sustainable and harmonious world. Hence, the importance of theology-based waste management as a technique based on religious views and values influenced by religious beliefs and principles. It can show that waste management must be done with the belief that taking care of waste is an order from Allah and His Messenger. By promoting awareness and cooperation, theology-based waste management can help reduce waste and its environmental impact.

The Fatwa No. 41/2014 of the Indonesian Ulema Council on Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage is directed by Islamic law on Israf and Tabdzir. According to Fatwa's viewpoint, every Muslim must keep the environment clean, use things for good, and avoid numerous diseases and acts of Tabdzir and Israf. The emphasis on waste management through attempts to convert garbage into valuable items to improve people's welfare is *Wajib Kifayah*, and littering is haram. Implementing the MUI Fatwa on trash management has had minimal impact on waste reduction in Indonesia. This circumstance also demonstrates that Indonesia, which has a Muslim majority, does not directly influence Muslims to follow Islamic law.

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