

When Bayān Speaks, Burhān Whispers, and 'Irfān Sleeps: An Al-Jabirian Epistemological Audit of Islamic Environmental Texts and Their Unspoken Alliance with the SDGs (2014–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Islamic environmental normativity has expanded rapidly, yet little is known about the epistemological architecture the ways of knowing on which its texts are built. This study operationalises Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri's tripartite epistemology (bayānī, textual; burhānī, demonstrative; 'irfānī, intuitive) as a directed content-analysis coding frame and audits six Islamic environmental texts issued between 2014 and 2025: four fatwas of the Indonesian Ulema Council on wildlife, waste, forest burning, and rivers, lakes and seas the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (2015), and Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth (2024). Coding 571 argumentative units yields three findings. First, the fatwas are bayānī-dominant but exhibit a demonstrative turn: the bayānī share falls monotonically from 69.5% (2014) to 39.8% (2025) while the burhānī share rises from 30.5% to 59.1%, propelled by explicit citation of global marine-pollution science and national statistics. Second, 'irfānī reasoning is nearly absent from fatwas (0–1.1%) but carries the motivational weight of the transnational texts (17.5% of the Declaration's units; 12.1% of the Covenant's). Third, engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals is almost entirely latent: only Al-Mizan names the goals, even as every text substantively aligns with goals on health, water, consumption, climate, and life on land an unspoken alliance.

INTRODUCTION

Religious communities have moved from the margins towards the centre of global environmental governance. What Lynn White Jr. (1967) once diagnosed as the ideological root of ecological crisis a doctrine of human dominion has been answered, half a century later, by an outpouring of religious environmental normativity across traditions. Within the Islamic world, this outpouring has acquired a schedule of its own. In August 2015, two months before the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015), Muslim scholars meeting in Istanbul issued the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (IDGCC), calling the world's 1.6 billion Muslims to phase out greenhouse gas emissions (International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, 2015). In February 2024, the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Faith for Earth Coalition launched *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*, an 88-page Islamic charter developed with the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) and partner institutions (Llewellyn & Khalid, 2024; UNEP, 2024). These transnational texts sit atop a quieter national infrastructure of religious environmental regulation, of which Indonesia home to the world's largest Muslim population is the paradigmatic case.

Since 2011, the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) has issued a series of environmental fatwas that scholars describe as among the most consequential experiments in faith-based environmental governance (Gade, 2015; Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). Fatwa No. 04/2014 forbade the killing and illegal trading of endangered species and was received internationally as the world's first fatwa on wildlife trafficking (McKay et al., 2014); Fatwa No. 41/2014 declared careless waste disposal religiously forbidden; Fatwa No. 30/2016 pronounced forest and land burning *haram* in the aftermath of Southeast Asia's transboundary haze emergencies; and Fatwa No. 4/MUNAS XI/MUI/2025, issued by the Council's eleventh national deliberation, extended the waste rulings to rivers, lakes, and seas on the basis of marine-pollution science (Majelis Ulama Indonesia [MUI], 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2025). Existing research has examined how such fatwas are produced, disseminated, and received by clerics and communities (Ansori et al., 2025; Gade, 2015; Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). What remains unexamined is the texts' internal epistemological architecture: the ways of knowing on which their authority is built.

This question is not ornamental. The Moroccan philosopher Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri (2011) argued that Arab-Islamic reason operates through three epistemic systems *bayān* (explication through transmitted text), *burhān* (demonstration through reason and evidence), and *'irfān* (knowledge through spiritual intuition) and that the historical hegemony of *bayān* over *burhān* explains much of the Islamic world's difficulty in appropriating modern science. Whether and how contemporary Islamic environmental texts balance these systems matters for at least three audiences: for *ulama*, whose authority depends on demonstrable fidelity to revelation; for policymakers, who must decide whether religious rulings can be coupled to technical programmes; and for the custodians of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), who increasingly court religious

actors while speaking a resolutely technocratic language. An eco-fatwa built almost entirely of Qur'anic citation mobilises a different public, and legitimates different interventions, than one built of pollution statistics; a text that never names the SDGs engages the 2030 Agenda differently than one that endorses it.

This study therefore conducts what we term an epistemological audit: a directed content analysis that codes every argumentative unit in six Islamic environmental normative texts issued between 2014 and 2025 the four Indonesian fatwas named above, the IDGCC, and *Al-Mizan* according to al-Jabiri's tripartite scheme, and maps each text's engagement with the SDGs. Three questions guide the analysis. (RQ1) How are the *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *'irfānī* epistemic systems distributed across these texts, and how has that distribution changed over time? (RQ2) Which SDG domains do the texts address explicitly, and which only latently? (RQ3) What follows, for theory and for the practice of religion–development partnership, from the observed epistemological profile? In answering them, the study offers three contributions. Methodologically, it operationalises al-Jabiri's philosophy as a replicable coding frame an application that, to our knowledge, has not previously been attempted. Empirically, it provides the first longitudinal audit of Indonesian eco-fatwas, including the 2025 waterways fatwa, whose demonstrative turn had not yet been documented. Conceptually, it proposes the notion of an unspoken alliance between revealed normativity and the SDGs, specifying the epistemological conditions under which that alliance could be spoken.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Environmental Thought and the Eco-Fatwa Phenomenon

Islamic environmental thought draws on a stable repertoire of Qur'anic concepts: the unity of God (*tawhīd*), which grounds the moral equality of creatures; the vicegerency of humankind (*khilāfah*) and the trust (*amānah*) it entails; the cosmic balance (*mīzān*) that human activity must not transgress; and the createdness of all beings in truth (*bi'l-haqq*), from which their intrinsic worth and rights derive (Foltz et al., 2003; Özdemir, 2003). Classical jurisprudence translated these doctrines into institutions inviolable sanctuaries (*haram*), protected rangelands (*himā*), conservation easements (*harīm*), and endowments (*awqāf*) that environmental historians now read as an indigenous conservation apparatus (Alpay et al., 2013; Foltz et al., 2003; Llewellyn & Khalid, 2024). Modern restatements range from Nasr's (1996) philosophical critique of the disenchantment of nature by modern science to popular campaigns that translate the tradition into the idiom of "water, waste, and watts" (Abdul-Matin, 2010).

In practice, this inheritance has been reactivated through the fatwa a non-binding but authoritative legal answer issued by qualified scholars to a questioner (*mustafti*). The Indonesian Ulema Council institutionalised environmental fatwa-making in 2011 by creating its Institute for Environmental and Natural Resources, and its subsequent rulings have become a global reference point for faith-based conservation (Gade, 2015; Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019). Empirical work has documented the fatwas' production process, including expert consultation and field visits (Gade, 2015; Mangunjaya

& Praharawati, 2019); their dissemination through sermons, *eco-pesantren*, and “environment preachers” (*dai lingkungan hidup*) (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019); and their mixed reception among local *ulama*, who face resource and knowledge constraints in translating rulings into community practice (Ansori et al., 2025). Field studies report measurable but uneven effects of sermon-based interventions on environmental attitudes and behaviour (McKay et al., 2014).

The transnational strand of the corpus developed in parallel. The IDGCC, drafted by academics and adopted at an international symposium in Istanbul ahead of COP21, married Qur’anic cosmology with climate science and diplomatic demands (International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, 2015). *Al-Mizan*, facilitated by UNEP’s Faith for Earth Coalition, restates the juristic and spiritual architecture of Islamic environmental ethics for a planetary audience, frames species extirpation as “ecocide,” and pledges institutional follow-up through an academy, a decade of action, and a global network (Llewellyn & Khalid, 2024; UNEP, 2024). Scholarship on both texts remains largely exegetical or celebratory; systematic comparison of how they know what they claim – their epistemic texture is lacking. That gap is consequential because the genres differ visibly: fatwas argue as law, declarations argue as prophecy and diplomacy, and covenants argue as comprehensive charters. Whether they also differ in underlying epistemology, and what such differences imply for their interoperability with secular sustainability frameworks, is precisely what this study measures.

Al-Jabiri’s Three Epistemic Systems and Their Indonesian Reception

In his *Critique of Arab Reason*, al-Jabiri (2011) distinguished three cognitive systems that structure knowledge in the Islamic tradition. *Bayān* is the episteme of the transmitted text: philological explication of the Qur’an and Sunna, juridical inference (including analogy and the *maṣlaḥah* reasoning of *uṣūl al-fiqh*), and the authority of scholarly consensus. *Burhān* is the episteme of demonstration: Aristotelian logic, mathematics, empirical evidence, and the causal proof characteristic of the *falsafa* tradition. *ʿIrfān* is the episteme of intuitive knowledge: Sufi metaphysics, unveiling, and the experiential “tasting” (*dhawq*) of divine reality. Al-Jabiri’s diagnosis was that Arab-Islamic intellectual history over-relied on *bayān*, producing a reason prone to scholastic repetition; his prescription was a renewed *burhān* disciplined by demonstration (al-Jabiri, 2011).

Al-Jabiri wrote as a critic of Arab intellectual history, but his tripartite scheme proved portable. In Indonesia, Kuntowijoyo (2008) built his “Islamic paradigm” and its celebrated prophetic social science humanisation, liberation, and transcendence on precisely this *bayānī-burhānī-ʿirfānī* triad, urging Indonesian Muslims to move from text-bound explication towards scientific and ethically transcendent knowledge. Subsequent Indonesian scholarship has used the triad pedagogically, to classify orientations of thought, and programmatically, to argue for integrating revelation, science, and spiritual experience in Islamic education. Yet the scheme’s empirical career is thin: applications remain conceptual, and no study, to our knowledge, has used it to code an actual corpus of normative texts. Operationalising the triad requires

boundary decisions, because real texts blend registers. We therefore treat *fiqh* maxims, legal statuses, classical juristic authorities, and doctrinal premises as *bayānī*; empirical claims, causal reasoning, scientific and technical sources, and references to state law and governance instruments as *burhānī*; and non-citational appeals to spiritual formation, cosmological contemplation, and eschatological accountability as *ʿirfānī*. Section 3 specifies the resulting codebook and its decision rules.

Religion and the SDGs: The Question of Epistemic Translation

The 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015) was adopted in a religiously dense environment. Once a “development taboo” (Ver Beek, 2000), religion is now recognised as a constitutive dimension of development theory and practice (Deneulin & Bano, 2009), as a partner in service delivery and advocacy (Tomalin, 2015), and as a shaper of climate politics across traditions (Veldman et al., 2013). Within this rapprochement, Islamic finance and philanthropy were coupled early and explicitly to the SDG framework, and Islamic ethical scholarship more broadly has been mapped onto the goals five dimensions of people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership (Khan & Haneef, 2022).

Missing from this literature is attention to the epistemological interface. The SDGs speak the language of indicators, targets, and evidence a *burhānī* idiom *par excellence*. Religious texts speak, variously, the languages of revelation, jurisprudence, and spiritual formation. Partnership across this divide requires what we call epistemic translation: the rendering of claims from one way of knowing into another without loss of authority on either side. Whether Islamic environmental texts are already performing such translation citing science, invoking revelation, cultivating dispositions and whether they acknowledge the SDG framework at all, are empirical questions that no study has yet posed. The present study addresses them, positioning itself at the intersection of three literatures Islamic environmental jurisprudence, al-Jabirian epistemology, and religion–development studies and offering the epistemological audit as the bridge.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a directed (deductive) qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of publicly available documents, complemented by quantitative tabulation of coded units. Directed content analysis is appropriate when prior theory supplies the coding categories; here, al-Jabiri’s (2011) tripartite epistemology furnished the *a priori* frame, and the research questions concerned its distribution across texts and time. Document analysis was chosen deliberately: the phenomenon of interest the reasoning of authoritative religious texts is fully observable in its published artefacts, and documents are stable, complete, and unobtrusive in ways that interview data are not (Bowen, 2009). Standard procedures for qualitative content analysis preparation, categorisation, and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), with reliability-oriented unitisation and coding rules (Krippendorff, 2018) guided the design.

Corpus and Sampling

Corpus selection followed five criteria: (a) the text issues religious norms (fatwa, declaration, or covenant) rather than scholarship or advocacy; (b) its subject matter is the environment; (c) it was issued between 2014 and 2025, a window bounded by the first wildlife fatwa and the newest waterways fatwa; (d) it represents both the national (Indonesian) and the transnational level of Islamic environmental normativity; and (e) its official, publicly accessible full text is available. Applying these criteria yielded six texts: four MUI fatwas (Nos. 04/2014, 41/2014, 30/2016, and 4/MUNAS XI/MUI/2025), the IDGCC, and *Al-Mizan*. Indonesia was selected as the national case because it combines the world's largest Muslim population with the most developed environmental fatwa practice (Gade, 2015). All fatwa texts were retrieved from the MUI's official fatwa database (fatwamui.com); the IDGCC text was retrieved from an archived full-text reproduction; and *Al-Mizan* was downloaded from its official site. Because secondary sources sometimes cite the 2014 waste fatwa as No. 47/2014 and the 2025 waterways fatwa as No. 6/Munas-XI/2025, we verified both numbers against the signed official documents and report them as printed there.

Analytical Framework and Codebook

The coding frame (Figure 1) operationalised al-Jabiri's three epistemic systems into eleven subcodes (Table 1). *Bayānī* subcodes distinguish Qur'anic evidence (B1), prophetic evidence (B2), juristic derivation fiqh maxims, legal statuses, classical authorities, and prior fatwas (B3) and uncited doctrinal premises such as the vicegerency of humankind (B4). *Burhānī* subcodes distinguish empirical facts (U1), causal reasoning (U2), scientific and technical sources (U3), and governance-instrumental references to state law, policy, and institutional processes (U4). *'Irfānī* subcodes distinguish spiritual-moral cultivation (I1), cosmological contemplation nature as sign, cosmic balance, the glorification of creation (I2) and eschatological accountability (I3).

Two rules discipline the coding. First, citations function as evidence: a verse or hadith quoted as a discrete exhibit is coded B1 or B2 even when its content is spiritual, whereas non-citational spiritual reasoning is coded I. Second, purely procedural clauses are excluded. Units follow each text's own argumentative segmentation: lettered and numbered items in the fatwas; displayed scriptural exhibits, numbered paragraphs, and pledge items in the declarations and the covenant. Because genres segment differently, counts are interpreted as composition profiles (within-text shares) rather than absolute densities. A second analytic axis mapped SDG engagement: each text was scored, for the SDG framework as a whole and for eight goal domains (health; water and sanitation; energy; consumption and production; climate; oceans; terrestrial life; and partnership), as absent (0), latent (1: substantive thematic correspondence without naming the goals), or explicit (2: the goals are named). The full scoring keys are documented in the supplementary dataset.

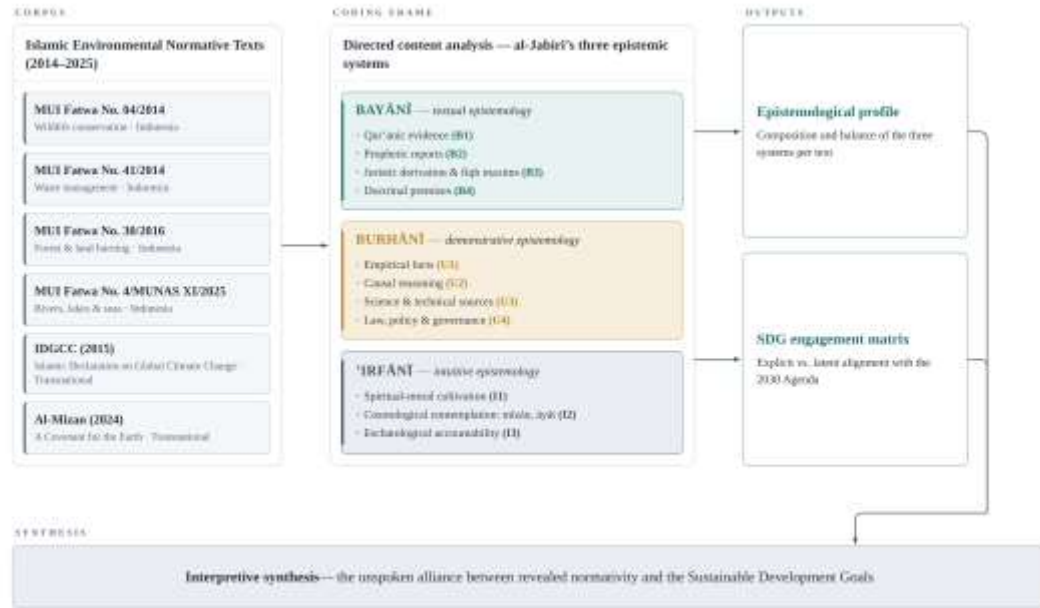


Figure 1. The Al-Jabirian epistemological audit framework applied to Islamic environmental normative texts (2014–2025).

Note. The framework operationalises al-Jabiri's (2011) three epistemic systems as a directed content-analysis coding frame; the corpus flows from left to right towards the interpretive synthesis. Authors' construction.

Table 1. Codebook: al-Jabiri's three epistemic systems operationalised as coding categories

Epistemic system	Subcode	Definition and decision rule
Bayānī (textual)	B1	Qur'anic evidence: a verse quoted or listed as a discrete evidentiary exhibit.
Bayānī	B2	Prophetic evidence: a hadith or sunna report quoted or separately described as evidence.
Bayānī	B3	Juristic derivation: fiqh maxims, legal statuses (<i>wājib</i> , <i>harām</i>), <i>uṣūl</i> reasoning, classical authorities, and prior fatwas.
Bayānī	B4	Doctrinal premise: an uncited theological statement used as an argumentative premise (e.g., the vicegerency of humankind).
Burhānī (demonstrative)	U1	Empirical fact: a descriptive claim about environmental or social conditions.
Burhānī	U2	Causal reasoning: claims linking causes and effects, including diagnoses and impact chains.
Burhānī	U3	Scientific and technical source: citations of science, statistics, or technical solutions.
Burhānī	U4	Governance-instrumental: references to state law, policy, institutional processes, and operational management.

Epistemic system	Subcode	Definition and decision rule
'Irfānī (intuitive)	I1	Spiritual-moral cultivation: non-citational appeals to <i>taqwā</i> , <i>ihsān</i> , <i>rahmah</i> , gratitude, and exemplarity.
'Irfānī	I2	Cosmological contemplation: nature as divine sign (<i>āyāt</i>), cosmic balance (<i>mīzān</i>), the glorification of creation.
'Irfānī	I3	Eschatological accountability: divine reckoning, the Day of Judgement, intergenerational spiritual legacy.

Note. Exclusion rule: purely procedural clauses are not coded. Granularity rule: units follow each text's own argumentative segmentation (lettered and numbered items in fatwas; scriptural exhibits, numbered paragraphs, and pledge items in the declarations and the covenant). The full codebook with decision rules and examples is provided in the supplementary dataset.

Procedure

The procedure unfolded in five steps. (1) Retrieval and familiarisation: the official texts were downloaded, converted to plain text, and read in full. (2) Unitisation: argumentative units were segmented according to the granularity rule. (3) Coding: each unit was assigned one dominant subcode, with secondary codes noted where a unit blended registers; the complete assignment, with quotations and locations, constitutes the audit trail released as the study dataset. (4) Computational verification: because *Al-Mizan* cites scripture at a scale beyond manual tallying, its citation counts were verified programmatically 132 verse-reference occurrences comprising 94 distinct Qur'anic passages and 29 prophetic-report citations and these verified counts entered the B1 and B2 totals. (5) Tabulation and mapping: frequencies were aggregated into the coding matrix and the SDG engagement matrix, from which the composition profiles reported in Section 4 were computed.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was pursued through an audit trail, peer debriefing, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail the unitised corpus with codes, quotations, and decision notes is released as the study dataset, allowing independent reanalysis. Coding was performed by one analyst and reviewed in peer-debriefing sessions by the other authors, who examined all boundary cases (for example, legal statuses resting on causal grounds, such as the 2025 fatwa's grounding of its prohibition in pollution science) and resolved divergences by consensus; consensus decisions are documented in the dataset's notes column. As scholars of Islamic studies at an Indonesian state Islamic university, we approach the corpus as insider-scholars: this position aids recognition of juristic registers while carrying the risk of over-reading familiar concepts, a risk mitigated by the codebook's explicit decision rules.

Ethical Considerations

The study analysed publicly available documents and involved no human participants; ethics approval and informed consent were therefore not required. Indonesian-language material was translated by the authors; quotations are reproduced within fair use, with full bibliographic identification of their sources.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Corpus Profile

Table 2 profiles the corpus. The four fatwas were issued by the MUI's Fatwa Commission the 2025 text by the Commission sitting in the Council's eleventh national deliberation (*Munas XI*, 20–23 November 2025) and the two transnational texts by scholarly collectives facilitated, respectively, by an international symposium and by UNEP's Faith for Earth Coalition. The corpus spans 204 pages of normative text, two languages, and three genres, with lengths ranging from 9 pages (Fatwa 41/2014) to 88 pages (*Al-Mizan*). All six texts were issued within the lifespan of the 2030 Agenda's agenda-setting decade, permitting a synchronic comparison of national and transnational reasoning and a diachronic comparison of the fatwa series.

Table 2. *Corpus of Islamic environmental normative texts (2014–2025)*

Code	Document	Issuer	Date	Level	Language	Length
F04/14	Fatwa No. 04/2014 on the Conservation of Endangered Species to Maintain Ecosystem Balance	MUI Fatwa Commission	22 Jan 2014	National	Indonesian	15 pp.
F41/14	Fatwa No. 41/2014 on Waste Management to Prevent Environmental Damage	MUI Fatwa Commission	7 Nov 2014	National	Indonesian	9 pp.
F30/16	Fatwa No. 30/2016 on the Ruling on Forest and Land Burning and Its Control	MUI Fatwa Commission	27 Jul 2016	National	Indonesian	10 pp.
F25	Fatwa No. 4/MUNAS XI/MUI/2025 on Guidelines for Waste Management in Rivers, Lakes, and Seas to Realise <i>Maslahah</i>	MUI Fatwa Commission, Munas XI	22 Nov 2025	National	Indonesian	13 pp.

Code	Document	Issuer	Date	Level	Language	Length
IDGCC	Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change	International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, Istanbul	18 Aug 2015	Transnational	English	6 pp.
AM24	<i>Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth</i>	UNEP Faith for Earth Coalition with ICESCO, IFEES, Uskudar University, and HBKU	27 Feb 2024	Transnational	English	88 pp.

Note. All texts retrieved in 2026 from their official sources: the four fatwas from the MUI fatwa database (fatwamui.com); the IDGCC from an archived full-text reproduction (arrcc.org.au);

Al-Mizan from *almizan earth*. Some secondary sources cite the 2014 waste fatwa as No. 47/2014 and the 2025 fatwa as No. 6/Munas-XI/2025; numbers are reported as printed on the signed official documents. MUI = Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulema Council); IDGCC = Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change; ICESCO = Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; IFEES = Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences; HBKU = Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Epistemological Composition of the Corpus

Table 3 reports the distribution of the 571 coded units, and Figure 2 visualises the composition profiles. Corpus-wide, *bayānī* reasoning accounts for 56.4% of units, *burhānī* for 37.3%, and *'irfānī* for 6.3%. The aggregate conceals two systematic patterns. The first is a national-transnational divide running in opposite directions: the fatwas are almost purely *bayānī*–*burhānī* the *'irfānī* share never exceeds 1.1% whereas the transnational texts carry virtually the corpus's entire *'irfānī* weight (17.5% of the IDGCC's units and 12.1% of *Al-Mizan*'s). The second pattern is longitudinal: across the fatwa series, the *bayānī* share falls monotonically 69.5% (04/2014), 55.9% (41/2014), 52.2% (30/2016), 39.8% (2025) while the *burhānī* share rises from 30.5% to 59.1%. The 2025 waterways fatwa is thus the first text in the series in which demonstrative reasoning outweighs textual reasoning. A sensitivity check that aggregates each fatwa's recommendations at block level rather than item level reproduces the same monotonic decline (*bayānī* shares of 78.9%, 66.7%, 64.8%, and 52.4%), indicating that the demonstrative turn is not an artefact of unit granularity, although at block level the *burhānī* share approaches rather than exceeds parity in the 2025 text.

Table 3. *Frequency and composition of coded argumentative units, by document and subcode*

Subcode	F04/14	F41/14	F30/16	F25	IDGCC	AM24	Total
B1 Qur'anic evidence	12	12	9	12	13	94	152
B2 Prophetic evidence	8	9	7	11	4	29	68
B3 Juristic derivation	35	16	18	13	0	12	94
B4 Doctrinal premise	2	1	1	1	3	0	8
<i>Bayānī</i> total	57	38	35	37	20	135	322
U1 Empirical fact	2	3	4	2	3	4	18
U2 Causal reasoning	0	1	1	1	5	13	21
U3 Scientific-technical source	3	7	6	20	10	2	48
U4 Governance-instrumental	20	19	21	32	14	20	126
<i>Burhānī</i> total	25	30	32	55	32	39	213
I1 Spiritual-moral cultivation	0	0	0	1	4	9	14
I2 Cosmological contemplation	0	0	0	0	5	14	19
I3 Eschatological accountability	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
<i>'Irfānī</i> total	0	0	0	1	11	24	36
Total units (N)	82	68	67	93	63	198	571
<i>Bayānī</i> share (%)	69.5	55.9	52.2	39.8	31.7	68.2	56.4
<i>Burhānī</i> share (%)	30.5	44.1	47.8	59.1	50.8	19.7	37.3
<i>'Irfānī</i> share (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	17.5	12.1	6.3

Note. Document codes follow Table 2. Each unit received one dominant subcode; blended units carry noted secondary codes in the dataset. Percentages are row-wise shares of each text's total units. Corpus totals in the rightmost column include all six texts.

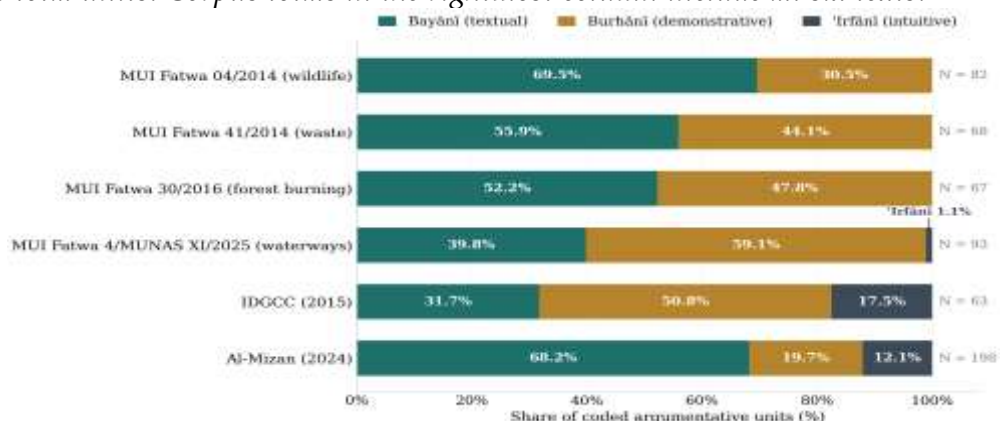


Figure 2. Epistemological composition of the six texts: the bayānī share of Indonesian fatwas declines as the burhānī share rises; 'irfānī reasoning survives only in the transnational texts.

Note. Shares are percentages of each text's coded argumentative units (N shown at bar ends). Document labels combine issuer, number, and theme; F25 = Fatwa No. 4/MUNAS XI/MUI/2025. Colour coding follows Figure 1.

Epistemological Profiles of the Individual Texts

The wildlife fatwa (F04/14) is the corpus's most textually saturated fatwa. Of its 82 coded units, 57 (69.5%) are *bayānī*: twelve Qur'anic verses from the animal-community verse (Q 6:38) to the corruption verse (Q 30:41) eight hadiths (from mercy-to-all-creatures to the Prophet's rebuke of the anthill-burning prophet), thirty-five juristic units including ten classical authorities ranging from Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani and al-Sharbini to the ninth-century polymath al-Jahiz, and two doctrinal premises (MUI, 2014a). Its *burhānī* content (25 units, 30.5%) is almost entirely operational: four conservation statutes, four consultation events and field visits, and seventeen recommendation items addressed to government, parliament, business, religious leaders, and communities. Not a single unit is *'irfānī*: even hadiths rich in spiritual content rewards for quenching an animal's thirst, hellfire for caging a cat are marshalled as legal evidence rather than as formation of conscience.

The waste fatwa (F41/14; 68 units) rebalances towards the operational: *bayānī* units fall to 55.9% while *burhānī* rise to 44.1%. Its evidentiary apparatus repeats the scriptural core twelve verses on vicegerency, cleanliness, and the prohibition of waste; nine hadiths, several specifically on water pollution, including the prohibition of relieving oneself in stagnant water; and six fiqh maxims but the operative and recommendatory sections dominate the *burhānī* column: technical definitions of waste and waste management, two environmental statutes, a multi-stakeholder consultation involving the environment ministry, a bank, and Ciliwung river communities, and operational guidance on recycling, waste banks, and enforcement (MUI, 2014b).

The forest-burning fatwa (F30/16; 67 units) continues the drift (52.2% *bayānī*, 47.8% *burhānī*). Its considerations open with an impact diagnosis smoke disasters on peatland disrupting transport, health, education, and biodiversity and its evidentiary apparatus pairs nine verses and seven hadiths with *maqāṣid* reasoning from al-Shatibi and liability doctrine from four further jurists. Seven statutes, workshop and field processes, and twelve governance recommendations complete the profile. The fatwa thus juridifies an environmental emergency: the *haram* ruling is grounded simultaneously in the corruption verses and in the causal claim that burning produces transboundary harm (MUI, 2016).

The 2025 waterways fatwa (F25; 93 units) is the corpus's demonstrative watershed: 39.8% *bayānī*, 59.1% *burhānī*, and the sole *'irfānī* unit in the fatwa series (1.1%). Its consideration section cites, verbatim, the marine-pollution findings of Jambeck et al. (2015); the statistic of the environment and forestry ministry (KLHK, 2023, as cited in the fatwa) that more than 82% of Indonesian rivers are moderately to heavily polluted; national data on untreated domestic waste; microplastic studies of the Citarum, Bengawan Solo, and Ciliwung rivers; eutrophication studies of Indonesian lakes; and coastal hypoxia findings alongside technical strategies of recycling, waste-to-energy, and circular economy (MUI, 2025). Twenty of its 55 *burhānī* units are scientific-technical (U3), the highest count in any fatwa. Yet the text's sole *'irfānī* gesture is a single clause framing waste management as "social worship" (*mu'āmalah*) a sacralising rubric

that remains legally rather than spiritually elaborated. The *haram* ruling itself integrates registers: dumping into waters is forbidden “because it contaminates the water source and endangers human health and other living beings” a *bayānī* status resting on *burhānī* ground.

The Declaration (IDGCC; 63 units) inverts the fatwa profile: 31.7% *bayānī*, 50.8% *burhānī*, 17.5% *ʿirfānī*. Its preamble is a scientific diagnosis the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, five IPCC reasons for concern, and the 2 °C/1.5 °C threshold wrapped in cosmological framing: humankind as *khalifah*, the earth’s “fine equilibrium (*mīzān*),” and the eschatological question “How will we face our Lord and Creator?” Its calls are diplomatically *burhānī*: an “equitable and binding conclusion” at COP21, the phase-out of greenhouse gases by mid-century, and 100% renewable energy. Excluding its seventeen scriptural exhibits, its prose is 69.6% *burhānī* the most demonstrative text in the corpus yet its *ʿirfānī* registers give the science its moral urgency.

The Covenant (*Al-Mizan*; 198 units) is the corpus’s integrative text. Its scriptural scaffold is immense 94 distinct Qur’anic passages and 29 prophetic reports yielding a 68.2% *bayānī* share; but its 75 prose units divide into 52.0% *burhānī* and 32.0% *ʿirfānī*, with only 16.0% juristic. Chapter 1 is a scientific appraisal mass extinctions, the carbon cycle, the IPCC’s sixth assessment, the Paris targets, and an endorsement of the proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023; Llewellyn & Khalid, 2024). Chapters 2 and 3 articulate an *ʿirfānī* cosmology creation as signs (*āyāt*), cosmic balance, and the ethics of *tawhīd*, *taqwā*, *ihsān*, and *rahmah* while Chapter 5 restates juristic institutions (*ḥimā*, *ḥarīm*, *awqāf*, the *muḥtasib*) and coins the ecocide-genocide analogy. It is also the only text that names the Sustainable Development Goals, endorsing them “wholeheartedly” while predicting that “they will not cure the crisis” a coupling, and a critique, in a single clause.

SDG Engagement

Table 4 and Figure 3 map the corpus’s engagement with the 2030 Agenda. Explicit engagement occurs once: *Al-Mizan* names the goals twice and endorses them. Every other alignment is latent. The pattern is domain-specific. The two 2014 fatwas engage terrestrial life (SDG 15) and the waste cluster (SDGs 3, 6, and 12) respectively; the 2016 fatwa engages health and forests (SDGs 3 and 15); the 2025 fatwa engages the water cluster (SDGs 3, 6, 12, and 14); the Declaration engages the climate-energy-poverty cluster (SDGs 1, 3, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17); and *Al-Mizan* engages nearly the whole agenda, including food, education, and inequality, alongside the eight domains scored in the matrix. Two silences are notable. None of the Indonesian fatwas mentions climate (SDG 13) the 2016 fatwa addresses fire and haze without climate framing, and the 2025 fatwa addresses plastic without it and none of them mentions partnership (SDG 17), although their production processes were themselves deeply collaborative. Across the corpus, revealed normativity thus walks in step with the 2030 Agenda without naming it: an unspoken alliance.

Table 4. *SDG engagement matrix: explicit versus latent alignment with the 2030 Agenda*

Document	SDGs named	SDG 3	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 17
F04/14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
F41/14	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
F30/16	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
F25	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
IDGCC	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
AM24	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note. 0 = absent; 1 = latent engagement (substantive thematic correspondence without naming the goals); 2 = explicit engagement (the Sustainable Development Goals are named). Domains: SDG 3 = health; SDG 6 = clean water and sanitation; SDG 7 = affordable and clean energy; SDG 12 = responsible consumption and production; SDG 13 = climate action; SDG 14 = life below water; SDG 15 = life on land; SDG 17 = partnerships. Additional latent engagements noted in the dataset: SDG 4 (education) in F25 and AM24; SDGs 1 and 10 (poverty and inequality) in IDGCC and AM24; SDG 2 (food) in AM24.

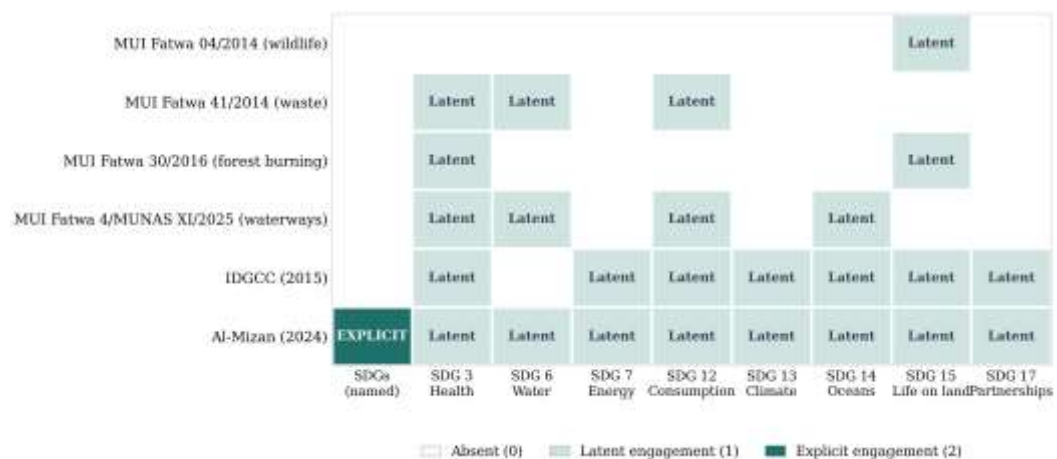


Figure 3. *SDG engagement across the corpus: one explicit endorsement (Al-Mizan) and a field of latent thematic alignment.*

Note. Cell shading encodes the engagement level defined in Table 4: white = absent; light = latent; dark = explicit. Document codes follow Table 2.

Representative Coded Excerpts

Table 5 illustrates the coding with ten excerpts that display the corpus's epistemological range, from doctrinal premises and juristic rulings to global science, cosmological framing, and the single explicit SDG endorsement. The full set of 38 coded excerpts, with original-language text, translation, location, and secondary codes, is provided in the supplementary dataset.

Table 5. *Representative coded excerpts*

Text	Location	Excerpt (English)	Code
F04/14	<i>Menimbang</i> (a)	"That many endangered species such as tigers, rhinoceroses, elephants and orangutans ... are today threatened with extinction as a result of human wrongdoing."	U1
F04/14	<i>Ketentuan Hukum</i> 6	"Killing, injuring, abusing, hunting and/or committing acts that threaten the extinction of endangered species is <i>haram</i> , except for a legitimate religious reason such as protecting and saving human life."	B3
F41/14	<i>Ketentuan Hukum</i> 2	"Discarding waste carelessly and/or discarding items that could still be used ... is <i>haram</i> ."	B3
F30/16	<i>Menimbang</i> (3)	"The smoke disaster, especially on peatland, which disrupts transport, health, education, social life, the economy, biodiversity and the environment."	U1
F25	<i>Memperhatikan</i> 6(d)	"According to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (2023), more than 82% of Indonesian rivers are moderately to heavily polluted."	U3
F25	<i>Ketentuan Hukum</i> 1	"Waste management is part of social worship (<i>mu'āmalah</i>). Therefore every Muslim is obliged to keep rivers, lakes and seas clean."	B3
IDGC C	Preamble	"The earth's fine equilibrium (<i>mīzān</i>) may soon be lost."	I2
IDGC C	Preamble	"What will future generations say of us, who leave them a degraded planet as our legacy? How will we face our Lord and Creator?"	I3
AM24	Para 1.14	"The Sustainable Development Goals are well and nobly crafted ... We — the authors of this Covenant — endorse them wholeheartedly, but they will not cure the crisis."	U4
AM24	Para 2.5	"God — be He exalted — has not made any of His creatures worthless ... All created beings have rights."	I2

Note. Excerpts translated by the authors from the official Indonesian texts where applicable; the IDGCC and Al-Mizan excerpts are quoted from the original English. Codes follow Table 1; blended units carry secondary codes in the dataset (the mu'āmalah clause carries a noted 'irfānī secondary code).

DISCUSSION

The Receding Hegemony of Bayān

Al-Jabiri's (2011) diagnosis a reason captive to textual explication describes the 2014 fatwas precisely. Their *Mengingat* sections are scholastic exhibitions: verses, hadiths, maxims, and authorities marshalled in the classical order of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Yet the longitudinal trend qualifies the diagnosis in an unexpected direction: the *bayānī* share within MUI's environmental fatwas has fallen by nearly thirty percentage points in eleven years without any decline in the texts' religious authority. The fatwa genre, it appears, can admit demonstrative content without ceasing to be a fatwa. What persists is the genre's architecture: even the 2025 text, saturated with statistics, opens with the same vicegerency premise and closes its rulings in the language of obligation and prohibition. The pattern suggests not the displacement of *bayān* but its flanking

by *burhān* a composite in which textual status increasingly rests on empirical grounds.

The persistence is theoretically meaningful. In al-Jabirian terms, the fatwas' evidentiary centre of gravity has shifted from transmission (*naql*) towards reason (*'aql*) without abandoning the former; in Kuntowijoyo's (2008) terms, they have begun the passage from interpretive towards scientific Islam that he prescribed, while stopping short of the transcendent register he called prophetic. The eco-fatwa is thus a living demonstration that the three systems are not sealed compartments but a gradient along which normative texts can travel and a reminder that genre, not epistemology alone, sets the pace of travel.

The Burhānī Turn: Science Enters the Fatwa

The 2025 fatwa's demonstrative turn has identifiable institutional drivers. The *mustaftī* process has evolved: where the 2014 fatwas answered requests from conservation coalitions, the 2025 text grew out of consultations with the environment ministry's water directorate, the national research agency, and river-care communities, and its evidentiary section reproduces their data. The Council's environmental infrastructure its natural-resources institute and, since 2023, an expanding stream of climate programmes has built durable channels through which science enters the drafting room. The result is a new evidentiary texture: a fatwa that cites global marine-pollution research, national statistics, and waste-to-energy technologies alongside the corruption verse.

Two features of this turn deserve emphasis. First, the science is instrumental rather than methodological: the fatwa cites findings and technologies but performs no demonstration of its own; its *burhān* is borrowed, not practised. Second, the turn is domain-contingent: marine plastic pollution a policy field thick with indicators and Indonesia-specific data invited demonstrative reasoning in a way that wildlife trafficking in 2014 did not. If, as al-Jabiri argued, the test of a rational tradition is its capacity to generate demonstration rather than merely cite it, the Indonesian eco-fatwa stands at the threshold: it has learned to quote *burhān* before learning to think it.

The Sleeping 'Irfān

Across 310 fatwa units, exactly one is *'irfānī*. The contemplative registers that give the transnational texts their force creation as divine signs, the cosmic balance, eschatological accountability are juridified in the fatwas: mercy hadiths become evidence for rulings; the balance verse becomes ground for prohibition; rewards and punishments become sanctions. This is not an oversight but a genre constraint: the fatwa answers a legal question, and its addressee is a questioner, not a conscience. Yet the constraint has a cost. The behavioural literature on faith-based conservation, and the Indonesian dissemination apparatus itself, locate change in values and dispositions sermons, *eco-pesantren*, and environment preachers (Mangunjaya & Praharawati, 2019; McKay et al., 2014). A fatwa stripped of *'irfānī* registers hands that work entirely to the delivery layer, producing a division of labour in which the text commands and the preacher must inspire.

The contrast with *Al-Mizan* is instructive. Its *'irfānī* chapters do legal work too the ecocide analogy translates contemplation into obligation but they also do formative work, cultivating the perception of creation that makes obligation felt. The sleeping system, in short, is the one that converts knowledge into motivation. Its revival need not await a new genre: the 2025 fatwa's single clause on social worship shows that a *bayānī* ruling can carry *'irfānī* freight in a phrase, and a drafting convention that paired each ruling with its spiritual ground would institutionalise the coupling.

The Unspoken Alliance with the SDGs

Why do texts that substantively advance the SDG agenda almost never say so? Genre is the first explanation: fatwas answer the questions posed to them, and Indonesian questioners have asked about waste and fire, not about goals. Caution is the second: the SDG framework's secular genealogy makes explicit endorsement a step that national fatwa bodies have been careful to avoid, even as they collaborate with the UN system at arm's length (Khan & Haneef, 2022). Timing is the third: the fatwas' thematic agenda was set by national emergencies haze crises, plastic pollution that run parallel to, but independently of, the global goal architecture. The exception proves the pattern: *Al-Mizan*, drafted under UNEP's facilitation, names the goals and endorses them and immediately subordinates them to critique, warning that they "will not cure the crisis." Explicit coupling, when it comes, comes with theological conditions.

The alliance's unspokenness has consequences for both parties. For the SDG community, the fatwas are invisible instruments: implementation of the water, consumption, and health goals in Indonesia could mobilise the world's largest Muslim population through rulings already issued, yet partnership frameworks often treat religious authority as an outreach channel rather than a co-legislator. For the *ulama*, the silence forfeits the reciprocity that naming would unlock: an explicit fatwa-goal alignment would make religious environmentalism legible to ministries, budgets, and indicators, precisely as *Al-Mizan* has become legible to the UN system. The 2025 fatwa shows that the bridge is already half-built its science is the goals' science; only the vocabulary is missing.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretically, the study offers three moves. It operationalises al-Jabiri's epistemology as a coding frame, giving a philosophical triad an empirical career and a template for auditing other corpora of religious normativity encyclicals, dharma declarations, and national religious rulings alike. It documents epistemic drift within a living fatwa institution, suggesting that the composition of religious reason is a measurable historical variable rather than a fixed inheritance. And it specifies the religion-development interface as a problem of epistemic translation, in which the currency of exchange is not values in the abstract but specific ways of knowing. Practically, the findings recommend a drafting discipline for fatwa bodies pairing each ruling with its scientific ground, as the 2025 text does, and its spiritual ground, which the 2025 text only gestures

towards; they recommend to policymakers that existing fatwas be read as latent SDG instruments and that partnerships be designed accordingly; and they recommend to theological educators that the environment-preacher curriculum include the *'irfānī* canon the signs, the balance, the trust that the fatwas leave sleeping.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When *bayān* speaks, *burhān* whispers, and *'irfān* sleeps: the formula describes Indonesian eco-fatwas with decreasing accuracy — and that is the finding. Between 2014 and 2025, the *bayānī* share of the Indonesian Ulema Council's environmental rulings fell from 69.5% to 39.8% while the *burhānī* share rose to 59.1%, as marine-pollution science, national statistics, and circular-economy technique entered the drafting room; the sole *'irfānī* unit in the entire fatwa series is a clause calling waste management social worship. The transnational texts carry the complement: the Islamic Declaration weds climate science to cosmic balance and eschatological accountability; *Al-Mizan* scaffolds 94 Qur'anic passages and 29 prophetic reports around a scientific appraisal and a contemplative ethic and alone names the Sustainable Development Goals. The corpus's relation to the 2030 Agenda is thus an unspoken alliance: substantive alignment across health, water, consumption, climate, and life on land, with the vocabulary of partnership withheld. Epistemological rebalancing *burhān* that demonstrates rather than merely cites, *'irfān* that wakes within the ruling itself, and SDGs spoken aloud is the agenda this audit leaves with the drafters of the next text.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Four limitations bound these claims. The corpus comprises six texts from one national tradition plus the transnational strand; comparative extension to other fatwa bodies and other religions is required before the drift thesis can be generalised. Coding was performed by a single analyst with structured peer debriefing; although the audit trail releases every unit, quotation, and decision rule for reanalysis, a formally designed multiple-coder study with reliability statistics should follow (Krippendorff, 2018). Genre-sensitive unitisation means that composition shares, not absolute densities, are comparable across texts; we have reported the aggregation choice under which the trend is preserved, but alternative schemes should be tested. Finally, the study measures texts, not effects: whether *'irfānī*-rich texts move believers differently from *bayānī*-rich ones is an open empirical question that reception research should address. These limitations chart the next programme: intercoder audits of larger corpora, comparative traditions, and behavioural tests of epistemological composition.

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