

# A Comparative Examination of the Right to a Healthy Environment in Imam Khamenei's Quranic Thought and the International Human Rights Regime

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## ABSTRACT

Environmental issues constitute a critical global challenge in the contemporary era. The well-being of present and future generations hinges upon safeguarding a healthy environment, as its degradation inflicts severe harm on human life. The international community has recognized the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right. Ayatollah Khamenei similarly accords this right a central place in human existence, viewing it as a right belonging to all generations.

The present study examines the right to a healthy environment from two competing perspectives: the international human rights framework and the Qur'anic-political thought of Ayatollah Khamenei. Employing a descriptive-analytical method with a comparative approach, the research elucidates the commonalities and divergences between these two paradigms.

Findings reveal that Ayatullah Khamenei regards a healthy environment as the essential foundation for human growth and transcendence in both material and spiritual dimensions. He considers its realization attainable through an integrated process encompassing religious duty, legal codification, criminalization of violations, cultural promotion, scientific advancement, and societal engagement. In contrast, the international human rights system—shaped by liberal-individualist principles and lacking a divine worldview—focuses exclusively on the material aspect of this right and suffers from inadequate mechanisms for effective implementation and enforcement. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the primary source of Ayatullah Khamenei's perspective is divine revelation (the Quran), in which this right is explicitly and unambiguously articulated.

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## Introduction

The environment emerged as a major global challenge during the 1970s, with the survival and well-being of both present and future generations recognized as contingent upon its preservation. Within the international human rights framework, the right to a healthy environment crystallized as a third-generation right, possessing both individual and collective dimensions. Its primary objective is to maintain ecological balance in the face of human activities and to ensure a dignified and healthy quality of life (Manşūrkhānī 2019, 311).

From the perspective of Quranic teachings, human beings can attain perfection and establish justice in society only when they benefit from divine bounties within a suitable and wholesome environment (Khamenei 2021, 68). The Quran severely condemns those who corrupt the earth and destroy crops and progeny, describing them as “the staunchest of enemies” (*al-add al-khiṣām*) (Quran 2:204).

In the Quranic-political thought of Ayatullah Khamenei, the environment occupies a central and foundational position; it is a right belonging to all generations of humanity, and its protection constitutes a universal and collective responsibility (Imam Khamenei, Statements Following the Visit to the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands, March 5, 1999; <https://khl.ink/f/2932>).

Comparative studies typically pursue specific objectives: identifying distinctive features and differences, highlighting similarities and potential synergies, or determining whether the two frameworks complement or extend one another. The present research adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology and a comparative approach to examine the right to a healthy environment from two distinct perspectives: the international human rights system and the Quranic thought of Ayatullah Khamenei.

By illuminating the legal and conceptual gaps in the international human rights regime concerning this right, the study concludes that Ayatullah Khamenei's paradigm neither continues nor synergizes with the international human rights framework. Rather, it represents a fundamentally distinct approach endowed with robust substantive and enforcement foundations.

### Literature Review

The scholarly value of any research is enhanced by situating it within the existing body of literature, clarifying its significance, and demonstrating its distinct contribution. A general review of the topic "environmental rights" reveals an extensive body of books and articles readily accessible through academic databases. However, the more specific subject of the "right to a healthy environment" — particularly when framed as a third-generation human right — has received considerably less attention and remains one of the pressing challenges of the contemporary world.

Regarding the most specific focus of the present study — a comparative examination of the right to a healthy environment from the perspectives of the international human rights regime and the Quranic-political thought of Ayatullah Khamenei — no prior research pursuing the same approach and objectives was identified. Thus, the present work lacks a direct precedent in the most specialized sense.

Notable prior studies directly or indirectly related to the topic include the following:

‘Alī Mashhadī (2013), in his monograph "The Right to a Healthy Environment: An Iranian–French Model," structures the analysis in two principal parts. The first part, comprising three chapters, delineates the conceptual, historical, and evolutionary foundations of the right to a healthy environment. The second part systematically examines the

normative, structural, and substantive developments of this right across different historical periods and legal systems.

Maḥbūbih Riḍā'ī Nandalī and Vahīd Nīkkhāh (2020), in “Mabānī-yi ḥaqq bar muḥīt-i zīst-i sālim” [Foundations of the Right to a Healthy Environment], organize their study into two main sections. The first section explores the general status and international recognition of the right to a healthy environment within the global human rights framework. The second section provides a detailed analysis of its guarantees under Iranian law, encompassing legislative and executive measures as well as judicial protection mechanisms. Notably, the authors do not address potential Quranic or broader Islamic jurisprudential foundations of the right.

The compilation “*Junbish-i ḥifz-i muḥīt-i zīst: Sukhanān-i rahbar-i mu‘azzam-i inqilāb dar bāb-i muḥīt-i zīst*” [The Movement to Preserve the Environment: Statements of the Supreme Leader on the Environment] (Imam Khamenei, 2015) brings together Ayatollah Sayyid ‘Alī Khamenei’s speeches, guidelines, and policy directives on environmental issues delivered between 1998 and 2015. Intended for both policymakers and the general public, the volume underscores the religious and ethical significance of environmental protection, identifies key challenges, articulates collective responsibilities, and presents relevant decrees issued by the Leader.

Ḥasan Majīdī and Sayyid Mahdī Mūsavī Niyā (2018), in their article “Dominant Discourse Factors on Ayatollah Khamenei’s Environmental Thoughts” published in the *Journal of Environmental Education and Sustainable Development*, investigate the centrality of the environment within Ayatollah Khamenei’s political and religious thought, highlighting his distinctive role as the leader of an Islamic society.

Similarly, Muḥammad Yazdī and Muḥammad Midādī (2022), in “*Muḥīt-i zīst dar andīshihā-yi Ayatollah Khamenei, rahbar-i mu‘azzam-i jumhūrī-yi islāmī-yi Iran*” [The Environment in the

Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran], also published in the *Journal of Environmental Education and Sustainable Development*, adopt a mixed quantitative–qualitative methodology within inductive and deductive paradigms. Their study offers a statistical and historical analysis of Ayatollah Khamenei’s environmental discourse over the three-decade period from 1991 to 2021.

Ayatollah Khamenei’s fundamental positions on the environment, rooted in Islamic thought, are expressed on numerous occasions and are publicly accessible via the official website <https://farsi.khamenei.ir> and the “Vilayat” application.

The distinguishing feature and principal contribution of the present research lie in its comparative approach: it systematically contrasts the international human rights framework with Ayatullah Khamenei’s Quranic-based paradigm, elucidates points of convergence and divergence, and highlights the substantive and enforcement superiority of the latter. This focused comparative perspective addresses a clear gap in the existing literature and responds to an evident scholarly need.

### Methodology

The methodology of any study is closely tied to its epistemological foundations and sources. Accordingly, the present research adopts a descriptive-analytical method combined with a comparative approach. It treats the international human rights framework and the Quranic-political thought of Ayatullah Khamenei as two distinct and independent intellectual paradigms, with the primary aim of identifying and analyzing the foundational principles of each.

With respect to data collection, the study relies exclusively on library-based methods, drawing on documentary sources, including books, articles, official speeches, and digital resources (official websites and dedicated applications). In terms of data analysis, the research falls within the category of comparative studies. It

systematically examines whether the two paradigms are complementary or continuous with one another, synergistic and similar, or fundamentally distinct and divergent.

The study is qualitative in nature and, in terms of its ultimate orientation, is both fundamental (theoretical) and applied. It seeks to elucidate the conceptualization and substantive content of the “right to a healthy environment,” as well as the mechanisms for its effective realization and enforcement, within the Quranic thought of Ayatullah Khamenei and the international human rights system—employing a rigorous comparative framework throughout.

## 1. Conceptual Analysis

### 1.1. The Concept of “Right” (*Haqq*)

In legal discourse, the term “right” (*haqq*) primarily denotes “having a right” rather than “being right” or “being correct.” The latter meaning—truth or correctness—falls outside the scope of international human rights law. In its technical sense, a “right” constitutes one of the core categories of human rights studies (see Qārī Sayyid Fāṭimī 2011, pp. 41-43). A right, understood as “having a right,” belongs to a human being qua human (*bi-mā huwa insān*), irrespective of individual or collective circumstances, attributes, or identities—whether social, ethnic, racial, religious, or otherwise. A right thus signifies entitlement or worthiness to something. This entitlement implies that its holder immediately (though not always exclusively) becomes the subject of a legal or moral claim, thereby creating the normative basis for corresponding duties and protections (Ṭālibī 2014, 72). In classical legal theory, rights (in the plural: *ḥuqūq*) refer to the ensemble of binding and general rules that govern social life with the aim of establishing order and justice, the enforcement of which is guaranteed by the state (Kātūziyān 2001, 1:666).

## 1.2. Individual and Collective Rights

In the liberal theoretical tradition, society, the state, and their attendant interests are accorded markedly lower normative priority than the individual and his or her particular interests. This hierarchical ordering stems from the instrumentalist conception of political community: both society and government are treated merely as artifices or mechanisms designed to perform functions that private motivations and individual preferences would not, of their own accord, adequately address. Consequently, liberal theorists display a pronounced reluctance to employ robust notions of the “common good” or “public interest” that posit society as an organic whole endowed with intrinsic value or teleological primacy. Even in instances where state intervention is conceded to be legitimate, liberal arguments characteristically seek to circumscribe the domain of justifiable public interest as narrowly as possible. Ultimately, the sole conception of the common good that liberalism is prepared to recognise is the maximisation of aggregate individual utility (or preference satisfaction), thereby reducing any ostensibly collective end to a derivative function of separate private ends (see Tawhīdfām 2011, 45).

The necessity of recognizing collective rights—typically classified as third-generation rights—features prominently in contemporary human rights discourse. Collective rights pertain to the interests and welfare of the community as a whole and, by their nature, cannot be fully realized or exercised by individuals in isolation. Individualism is seen to exert a corrosive influence on religious and human values; framing rights exclusively in individualistic terms stands in tension with religious beliefs, and a truly humane, faith-oriented society cannot be constructed upon individualistic premises.

In the Islamic metaphysical framework, individualism is deemed reprehensible because all beings are manifestations of the divine names emanating from the singular Essence of absolute Unity. Having

descended through the arc of multiplicity, humanity is now collectively engaged in an ascendant return toward the realm of divine oneness. Consequently, Islamic rites and acts of worship are intrinsically communal, and the individual, as bearer of a particular divine name, can attain divine pleasure (riḍwān Allāh) and true felicity only by achieving existential unity with others, cultivating love for them, and situating personal salvation within the salvation of the collective. Thus, authentic human perfection remains inseparable from participation in the communal journey toward the One (see Şarāmī & Nikū’ī Mihr 2019, pp. 193-195).

In Ayatollah Khamenei’s anthropological framework, the “individual human being” and the “collective body of humanity” do not negate one another. Rather, he approaches the issue from the perspective of Islamic epistemology, enabling a coherent explanation of both individual and collective rights grounded in religious anthropology: “Islam has two viewpoints on human beings and these viewpoints complete each other. ... The first viewpoint is about human beings as a single individual. Islam considers you, me and other people as individuals with the power to think and make decisions. ... The second viewpoint considers human beings as a group of people. These two viewpoints are in line with and complete each other” (Khamenei, Leader’s Speech at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, May 15, 2007; <https://B2n.ir/rm2790>). Thus, in the individual dimension, a person possesses specific rights and duties, while in the collective dimension, he or she bears corresponding social responsibilities, as reflected in the Quranic verse: “*He brought you forth from the earth and made it your habitation*” (Quran 11:61) and he should manage and build the world (ibid). Accordingly, within the Quranic paradigm articulated by Ayatullah Khamenei, both individual and collective rights find legitimate and coherent justification in their respective contexts.



### 1.3. The Relationship between Right and Duty

Human social existence is fundamentally structured upon the intrinsic interdependence of rights and duties. Legal systems simultaneously confer rights upon individuals and peoples while imposing corresponding duties. The pervasive culture of duty-evasion in liberal thought has led to the systematic marginalization—or even outright rejection—of social responsibility, while excessively promoting an extreme form of right-centeredness (rights absolutism). The international human rights regime is characteristically right-centric and duty-averse: virtually all obligations are shifted onto third parties, especially states, whereas individuals remain largely indifferent and unaccountable to one another (see Tawhīdfām 2011, 45). This right-centered orientation stems from political individualism, which conceives of the human being as essentially a bearer of rights rather than a subject of duties.

In sharp contrast, Ayatullah Khamenei's Quranic paradigm establishes a real and inseparable correlation between right and duty, regarding their interdependence as one of the foundational pillars of Islam. Human beings simultaneously possess rights and bear general and national duties (Khamenei, Leader's Address to a Large Gathering in Mashhad, March 21, 2005; <https://B2n.ir/hh2485>). Critiquing Western liberal thought, Imam Khamenei observes: "The West has gone so far in negating duty that it rejects not only religious worldviews but even non-religious ideologies that contain any notion of obligation or prohibition" (Khamenei, speeches delivered at Tarbiyat Modarres University, 3 September, 1998; <https://khl.ink/f/2900>).

The Quran condemns those who, instead of accepting personal responsibility, attempt to transfer it even onto divine miracles, as in the verse: "So go forth, you and your Lord, and fight! We are sitting right here" (Quran 5:24). Such individuals are cursed precisely because they absolve themselves of duty. According to Ayatollah Khamenei, God's

will is that corruption be eradicated through the responsible agency and collective effort of human beings (Khamenei 2021, *The General Outline of Islamic Thought in the Quran*, 53). In summary, whereas the international human rights system is predominantly right-oriented and systematically neglects duties, in Ayatollah Khamenei's thought rights and duties are invariably articulated together, and a genuine, substantive correlation is established between them.

#### 1.4. The Right to a Healthy Environment

The term "environment" (*muḥīt-i zīst*) literally denotes the surrounding sphere, the place of habitation, and encompasses everything that sustains life. The Persian word "zist" is synonymous with "life" (*hayāt*). Thus, "environment" refers to the totality of conditions and elements within which human life unfolds. The modern concept of the environment gained prominence after World War II and has since evolved into the notion of the "human environment" and a recognized human right. It now signifies the social, economic, physical, and biological structures that enable a healthy and dignified existence. The right to a healthy environment is understood as a cluster of entitlements that individuals and communities must enjoy—by virtue of living within the environment—to ensure their proper development and well-being (Mashhadī 2013, pp. 52-55). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2019) defines "environment" in two complementary senses: first, as the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors (including climate, soil, and living organisms) that act upon an individual organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival; and second, as the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or a community (Merriam-Webster 2019, s.v. "environment"). Article 14 of the Draft Third International Covenant on Solidarity Rights (still under discussion) defines the right to a healthy environment as follows: "Every human being, individually and collectively, has the right to a

healthy and ecologically balanced environment conducive to economic, social, cultural, and legal development” (see Vakīl & ‘Askarī 2004, 63).

The International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (1996) and subsequent environmental cases, has emphasized: “The environment is not an abstraction but represents the living space, the quality of life, and the very health of human beings, including generations unborn. Degradation of the environment constitutes a direct threat to human health in its multiple dimensions.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, the right to a healthy environment reflects and operationalizes fundamental values such as the right to life and the right to health. It serves as a prerequisite for the continued existence of present and future generations and maintains an organic link with the principle of sustainable development (see Mawlā’ī 2007, 273). In international instruments, the right to a healthy environment is classified as a collective and solidarity right. The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981) and the Barcelona Declaration (1998) explicitly recognize it as a collective right of peoples, affirming that the enjoyment of a healthy and ecologically balanced environment belongs to peoples as a whole (Qārī Sayyid Fāṭimī & Mashhadī 2011, 224). At its deepest level, the legal foundation of this right rests upon the inherent dignity and worth of the human person. It simultaneously generates a normative situation that combines entitlements with corresponding duties. Numerous Quranic verses<sup>2</sup> indicate that God has created the earth and its environment for the benefit of all humankind across all times, thereby establishing a universal and intergenerational trust.

<sup>1</sup>. Advisory opinion, I.C.J. Reports 1996, p.226 paragraph 29.

<sup>2</sup>. ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا﴾ (البقرة/٢٩)؛ ﴿وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِثْنًا﴾ (البجائية/١٣) ...

“It is He who created for you all that is in the earth” (Quran 2:29); “And He has disposed for you] r benefit [whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth” (45:13) ...

## **2. Comparative Examination of the Right to a Healthy Environment**

Legal rules achieve their intended purpose only when they are backed by effective enforcement mechanisms. A legal rule, in its proper sense, is one whose observance is guaranteed by the coercive authority of the state or another governing power (Kātūziyān 2001, 1:432). A right that lacks enforceable sanctions is inevitably reduced to a mere moral aspiration; it loses the distinctive feature of law—its coercive and deterrent capacity—which fundamentally distinguishes legal norms from ethical precepts. The effective guarantee of a healthy environment is therefore not an ancillary or optional matter: it constitutes the indispensable precondition for protecting human dignity and safeguarding the full development of the human personality across generations (Pathak 1992, 209).

### **2.1. The Right of Peoples to a Healthy Environment in the International Human Rights System**

The international human rights system regards the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental right essential for the continuation of human life. Principle 1 of the “1972 Stockholm Declaration” constitutes the cornerstone of this recognition: “Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.” Similarly, “Article 24” of the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights” (1981) enshrines the right to a healthy environment as an autonomous right: “All peoples shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favourable to their development,” thereby linking it directly to human dignity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>. African Charter on Human and Peoples, Rights. 1981.

The right to a healthy environment is widely regarded as one of the most significant third-generation (solidarity) rights. Although it lacked clear contours and concrete legal status for much of the twentieth century, it has profoundly influenced various branches of international law in recent decades. The growing awareness of the irreversible damage caused by environmental degradation, combined with a relative consensus between developed and developing countries, has accelerated its recognition, particularly at the regional level. The “1972 Stockholm Conference” established an indissoluble link between human rights and environmental protection. Principle 1 explicitly declared a healthy environment a human right while simultaneously imposing protection duties on states, individuals, and peoples alike.

In more recent approaches, human rights advocates recognize the right to a healthy environment as an independent entitlement to an environment of adequate quality. For instance: The “1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution” (Article 1) protects the right to clean air, treating air pollution as a transboundary phenomenon that threatens human health, ecosystems, and material goods, and impedes legitimate uses of the environment.<sup>4</sup>

The “1982 Draft Third International Covenant on Solidarity Rights” (still under discussion) explicitly elevated the right to a healthy environment to the level of human dignity. Its “Article 15” obliges states: “to ensure that the natural conditions of life are not subjected to adverse modifications that harm human health and collective well-being, except where such harm is indispensable for collective development and no alternative exists” (Vakīl & ‘Askarī 2004, 63). The “World Charter for Nature” (1982), particularly Articles 14-24, mandates states to implement and enforce the right to a healthy environment through national legislation and international cooperation.

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<sup>4</sup>. Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, 1979.

Certain instruments further recognize the right to environmental information as a collective human right that must be made accessible to people (Husaynī & Muḥammadī 2017, 144).

### **2.1.1. Enforcement Mechanisms and Guarantees in the International Human Rights System**

The environment belongs equally to all peoples and to all generations of humankind. The imperative to effectively guarantee the right to a healthy environment is therefore undeniable for the international community. Environmental protection has become one of the few truly universal concerns of humanity. The World Health Organization reported in 2023 that air pollution alone causes more than 7 million premature deaths annually worldwide. In this alarming context, securing the right to a healthy environment acquires redoubled urgency and can only be achieved through long-term planning, comprehensive policy integration across states, and genuine public participation.

The principal governing principles and enforcement mechanisms relied upon by the international system are the following:

1. Principle of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources: Formally recognized by UN General Assembly Resolution 1803 (XVII) of 14 December 1962, this principle was later reaffirmed in Article 3 of the “Convention on Biological Diversity” (1992): “States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”

2. Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) This principle was articulated with unprecedented clarity in Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992): “States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve,

protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command." The same spirit is reflected in Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities (1997), proposed by the InterAction Council: "All property and wealth must be used responsibly in accordance with justice and for the advancement of the human race."<sup>5</sup>

3. Intergenerational equity is a concept grounded in the recognition that humans share the environment with one another, which entails preserving the capacities related to the quality of, and access to, the heritage inherited from previous generations and maintaining those capacities for future generations (see Arashpoor 2022, 107). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, explicitly states in Article 3, paragraph 1: "The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (UNFCCC, 1992).

4. Principle of Sustainable Development: The Environmental Charter states: "...in order to ensure sustainable development, meeting the needs of the present generation must not jeopardize the capacities of future generations..." Article 6 of the Charter emphasizes public policies and the principle of sustainable development with a view to promoting and protecting the environment. Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development affirms: "Human beings

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<sup>5</sup>. A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES 1997.

are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.” From this principle, it has been inferred that “in the new era of international law, it is no longer solely the interests of states that are considered; rather, beyond that, the interests of humanity and the well-being of the planet Earth are at the center of attention”<sup>6</sup> (see ‘Arab Asadī 2018, 403).

5. Principle of Prevention and Precaution: The duty to prevent environmental harm is one of the oldest and most firmly established norms of international law. It is expressed, *inter alia*, in Article 3 of the Fundamental Charter of the Environment (European Union): “Every person has the duty, within the framework determined by law, to prevent damage to the environment that he or she may cause or, if this is not possible, to limit its consequences.” Classic examples include the 1971 Biological Weapons Convention, which prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, and requires the destruction of existing stocks of biological and toxin weapons (Thaqafī ‘Āmirī 1997, 53). It must be emphasised, however, that environmental norms within the contemporary international legal order have not attained the status of peremptory norms from which no derogation is permitted, nor are they universally regarded as obligations owed to the international community as a whole. Consequently, the right to a healthy environment lacks robust enforcement mechanisms in this system, and grave violations of this right by developed countries are frequently observed on a widespread scale. A salient example is the withdrawal of the United States from the Kyoto Protocol, notwithstanding the fact that the Protocol was specifically designed to safeguard a healthy environment, prevent atmospheric pollution, and preserve conditions conducive to human life.

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<sup>6</sup>. ICJ, Case Concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia), 1977 ICJ Rep. 7, separate opinion of Vice-President Weeramantry, para. C(c).



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The Environmental Charter states: “...in order to ensure sustainable development, meeting the needs of the present generation must not jeopardize the capacities of future generations... .” Article 6 of the Charter emphasizes public policies and the principle of sustainable development with a view to promoting and protecting the environment. Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development affirms: “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.” From this principle, it has been inferred that “in the new era of international law, it is no longer solely the interests of states that are considered; rather, beyond that, the interests of humanity and the well-being of the planet Earth are at the center of attention” (see Arab Asadi, 2018, p. 403).

## **2.2. The Right to a Healthy Environment in the Quranic Thought of Imam Khamenei**

The Holy Quran regards the environment as a divine gift belonging to all generations of humankind: “*It is He who created for you all that is in the earth*” (Quran 2:29). Human beings are duty-bound to adopt a trusteeship-oriented conduct—marked by justice and wisdom—toward

the environment and to actualise its inherent capacities (Imam Khamenei, Statements Delivered at the Meeting with Officials and Activists in the Fields of Environment, Natural Resources, and Green Spaces, March 8, 2015; <https://khl.ink/f/29121>, <https://B2n.ir/us5813>). Islam considers a healthy environment one of the fundamental human needs and does not envisage human spiritual ascent in a vacuum; rather, it occurs in tandem with the flourishing of the material world and the natural order (Imam Khamenei, Statements Delivered at the Meeting with Officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, December 2, 2000, <https://khl.ink/f/3039>). The preservation, stewardship, and prudent management of the environment—in both its material and spiritual dimensions—for present and future generations constitute an indispensable requirement of human life. God says in the Quran, “*It is He Who has produced you from the earth and settled you therein*” (Quran 11:61). Cultivating the earth does not mean merely developing inanimate matter; rather, it encompasses the entirety of what the earth bears, the most important of which is human life itself (Imam Khamenei, speeches delivered in a meeting with the officials and researchers working in the Committee of Cognitive Science Development, January 23, 2019; <https://B2n.ir/ks7346>).

The root of all corruption on earth lies in estrangement from the true religion and deviation from it. Consequently, only by attending to both material and spiritual dimensions can a fully safeguarded environment be guaranteed. The right to a healthy environment, as a conceptual and practical construct, responds to a pressing need of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, the Quran contains numerous descriptive statements concerning nature and the relationship and bond between humanity and nature, from which a comprehensive set of supportive norms and regulations can be derived—such that a complete environmental school of thought may be articulated (Gurjī 1984, 115).

### 2.2.1 The Material Dimension of the Right to a Healthy Environment

The Quran regards the bounties of nature, without exception, as belonging to all humankind: “*It is He who created for you all that is in the earth...*”<sup>7</sup> (Quran 2:29). A healthy environment is thus a universal common right: “*And the earth, He laid it out for mankind*”<sup>8</sup> (Quran 55:10). Imam Reza (a), in his exegesis of this verse, stated explicitly: “for all people”<sup>9</sup> (Majlisī 1983, 24:67-68). The preservation of the environment is an imperative for humanity: “*And do not cause corruption on the earth after its restoration...*”<sup>10</sup> (Quran 7:56). ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains that “corruption on the earth” encompasses both natural calamities and deliberate human acts such as war, insecurity, arson, and other forms of destruction (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1992, 16:196). Allah has regulated societal affairs through divine legislation and prohibited corruption therein: “*...and eat and drink, but do not waste; indeed He does not like the wasteful*”<sup>11</sup> (Quran 7:31). Commenting on this verse, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī observes that it contains two permissive commands (“*eat and drink*”) and one prohibitive injunction of a prohibitory nature (“*Indeed, He does not like the wasteful*”). Extravagance (*isrāf*), in principle, indicates legal prohibition unless contextual evidence establishes otherwise. The context of the verse clearly supports a prohibitive ruling of prohibition (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1992, 16:196).

7. ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا...﴾ (البقرة/٢٩)

8. ﴿وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ﴾ (الرحمن/١٠)

9. تفسير القمي أبي عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ أَبِي الْحَسَنِ الرُّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: فِي قَوْلِهِ ... ﴿وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ﴾ قَالَ: «لِلنَّاسِ».

Imam al-Riḍā (a), on the authority of al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālīd, regarding the verse “And the earth He laid out for all creatures (*al-anām*)”: He said, “For all people.”

10. ﴿وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا...﴾ (الأعراف/٥٦)

11. ﴿... وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾ (الأعراف/٣١)

Those who destroy the environment are the most implacable enemies of humankind: “...*the most violent of adversaries*”<sup>12</sup> (*Quran* 2:204). Whenever such persons gain power over the earth, they hasten to spread corruption therein and destroy crops and progeny (see Khamenei 2022, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 133). In verse: “*And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock And Allah does not love mischief making*”<sup>13</sup> (*Quran* 2:205), the destruction of crops and progeny constitutes one of the clearest instances of “corruption on the earth” (*ifsād fī al-arḍ*) and environmental degradation (Qurtūbī 1985, 3:18). Corruption on the earth, in its broadest sense, includes any act of destruction that disrupts the orderly and salutary system that has been established (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1992, 2:98). Humanity has entered a home in whose construction it played no part; it possesses no right to destroy it. Its sole entitlement is to benefit from its resources, and even this right is subject to binding legal regulations. The Quran repeatedly emphasises that the environment is a common heritage belonging to all people and to all generations—it is not the exclusive possession of any single generation (Imam Khamenei, Statements Delivered at the Meeting with Officials and Activists in the Fields of Environment, Natural Resources, and Green Spaces, March 8, 2015; <https://khl.ink/f/29121>, <https://B2n.ir/us5813>). Accordingly, the exercise of this right must be conducted in a manner that preserves the ability of future generations to enjoy and benefit from it.

### 2.2.2. The Spiritual Dimension of the Right to a Healthy Environment

The right to a healthy environment is not confined to its material dimension. Article 17 of the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights explicitly emphasises the spiritual dimension, namely an environment

<sup>12</sup>. ﴿أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ﴾ (البقرة/٢٠٤)

<sup>13</sup>. ﴿وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ﴾ (البقرة/٢٠٥)

that is wholesome and free from moral corruption, thereby enabling genuine human flourishing and spiritual growth. Imam Khamenei states: “The ultimate goal of Islam is to enable all generations to enjoy the divine blessings; and to create a healthy and peaceful society without gaps between various social classes and ready for moving toward growth and prosperity. Thus, the religious obligations are there to maintain balance and equilibrium in the enjoyment of natural blessings while avoiding excessive use and offending others” (Imam Khamenei, 10 June, 2003; <https://B2n.ir/kw1286>).

Human beings are prohibited from bringing about their own destruction. The Quran states unequivocally: “... *and do not cast yourselves with your own hands into destruction...*”<sup>14</sup> (Quran 2:195). In its broader conception, “destruction” (*tahlukah*) encompasses not merely physical ruin but also spiritual demise and the death of virtues (Imam Khamenei, *Tafsīr-i sūra-yi Barā’at* 2022, 230). As ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī explains, the imperative of the verse is absolute; consequently, its prohibition extends comprehensively to all forms of extremism and negligence (see Ṭabāṭabā’ī 1992, 2:64). Particularly alarming are those acts of collective self-destruction perpetrated by human hands. The Quran further warns: “... *Do not act wickedly on the earth, causing corruption*”<sup>15</sup> (Quran 26:183). Those who spread corruption recognise no right—whether of God or of fellow human beings. Were it not for the resistance offered by the righteous, they would not hesitate to demolish even places of worship.<sup>16</sup> No spiritual right, likewise, remains safe from their oppression.

<sup>14</sup>. ﴿... وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ...﴾ (البقرة/١٩٥)

<sup>15</sup>. ﴿... وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ﴾ (الشعراء/١٨٣)

<sup>16</sup>. ﴿...وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهْذَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا...﴾ (الحج/٤٠)؛ ﴿...وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ...﴾ (البقرة/٢٥١)

“...Had not Allah repulsed the people from one another, ruin would have befallen the monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which Allah’s Name is mentioned

### 2.2.3. Mechanisms for Ensuring the Right to a Healthy Environment in the Quranic Thought of Imam Khamenei

In the intellectual framework of Imam Khamenei, the mechanisms for guaranteeing the right to a healthy environment are supported within a multifaceted process encompassing political, legal, ethical, and social dimensions. Humanity bears a profound responsibility for the preservation of nature (Khamenei 2015, 6). He has described environmental degradation at times as irreparable and has referenced the United States' withdrawal from the "Kyoto Protocol"<sup>17</sup> as an instance of violating the rights of nations (Imam Khamenei, Statements Delivered at the Meeting with Officials and Activists in the Fields of Environment, Natural Resources, and Green Spaces, March 8, 2015; <https://khl.ink/f/29121>, <https://B2n.ir/us5813>). From his perspective, safeguarding the environment is achieved through collective endeavour and constitutes a vital imperative rather than a mere ornamental concern, given its direct bearing on human survival and future generations (Imam Khamenei, Statements Following the Visit to the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands, March 5, 1999; <https://khl.ink/f/2932>). In his directives on environmental protection, Imam Khamenei has outlined key indicators whose implementation would effectively ensure the right to a healthy environment.

#### 2.2.3.1. Legal Guarantees for Environmental Protection in the Thought of Imam Khamenei

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*greatly...*" (Quran 22:40). "...Were it not for Allah's repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted ..." (Quran 2:251).

<sup>17</sup>. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto, 11 December 1997.

The United States, under then-President Donald Trump, officially withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2020, citing its adverse impact on the American economy. Subsequently, upon assuming the presidency, Joe Biden promptly reinstated the United States' participation in the agreement (Biden and the Return of the United States to the Paris Climate Change Agreement, 13 December 2020, <https://www.ipis.ir/portal/newsview/62042>).

The most meritorious act of worship, according to Imam Ṣādiq (a), is the fulfilment of the rights owed to fellow believers: “Allah is not worshipped with anything more virtuous than the discharge of the right of a believer”<sup>18</sup> (Kulaynī 1986, 2:170). The destruction of the environment constitutes a flagrant violation of the rights of others—both present and future generations. In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the protection of the environment is declared a public duty binding upon all citizens and generations, and any environmentally destructive activity, even if undertaken in the course of economic development, is prohibited (Imam Khamenei, 10 June, 2003, <https://khl.ink/f/3181>, <https://B2n.ir/kw1286>). Imam Khamenei has repeatedly emphasised the necessity of robust legislation to safeguard the environment. He opines that legal gaps in environmental protection must be eliminated; these laws are sorely lacking and must be enacted” (Imam Khamenei, 5 March 2013, <https://B2n.ir/ym6550>).

#### 2.2.3.2. Criminalization of Environmental Destruction

Environmental destruction can affect an entire nation, a geographical region, or even the whole world; yet, by the time its consequences are fully felt, the damage is often irreversible (Khamenei 2015, 38). For this reason, Imam Khamenei insists that such acts must be explicitly criminalized, with no leniency shown in their prosecution or punishment (Imam Khamenei, Statements Delivered at the Meeting with Officials and Activists in the Fields of Environment, Natural Resources, and Green Spaces, March 8, 2015; <https://khl.ink/f/29121>, <https://B2n.ir/us5813>). This position is firmly grounded in the Quran, particularly in the verse that identifies the deliberate destruction of crops and livestock—and by extension, the broader ecosystem—as a

<sup>18</sup>. عَنْهُ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنْ جَمِيلٍ عَنْ مُرَازِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: «مَا عُبِدَ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ أَفْضَلَ مِنْ أَدَاءِ حَقِّ الْمُؤْمِنِ».

prime example of “corruption on the earth” (*ifsād fī al-arḍ*): “And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock And Allah does not love mischief making”<sup>19</sup> (Quran 2:205). *Tafsīr Nimūnih* explains that this corruption operates at the societal level, encompassing harm to both property and human life (Makārim Shīrāzī 2000, 2:75). The criminal nature of environmental destruction is further corroborated by authoritative ḥadīth. Imam Ṣādiq (a) warned: “Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees, for Allah will pour His punishment upon you without respite”<sup>20</sup> (Kulaynī, 1986, 5:264). Such acts, therefore, are not merely civil wrongs but grave offences that invite divine retribution and must consequently be subject to legal sanctions.

#### 2.2.3.3. Preventive Measures to Safeguard a Healthy Environment

Certain forms of environmental damage are irreversible; once inflicted, they cannot be remedied. Consequently, the adoption of robust preventive measures is imperative. Imam Khamenei has repeatedly stressed the necessity of fundamental and resolute action to address environmental crises, most notably through his promulgation of the General Policies on the Environment (Imam Khamenei, 8 March 2015, <https://khl.ink/f/29121>, <https://B2n.ir/us5813>). Genuine preventive action is a root-level, systemic undertaking that cannot be reduced to the efforts of a single government, a bilateral initiative, or the limited mandate of one or several administrative agencies.

#### 2.2.3.4. Collective and Universal Responsibility

Imam Khamenei places paramount emphasis on shared, universal responsibility as the cornerstone of guaranteeing the right to a healthy environment: “The issue of the environment is not the concern of this

<sup>19</sup>. «وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ» (البقرة/٢٠٥)

<sup>20</sup>. عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مُضَارِبٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: «لَا تَقْطَعُوا الشَّجَرَ فَيَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَذَابَ صَبَاءً».



administration or that administration; it is a long-term issue... It is not the affair of this political faction or that faction; it is the concern of the entire nation. Everyone must join hands and resolve this problem together” (Imam Khamenei, 8 March 2015, <https://khl.ink/f/29121>). In his view, state officials are duty-bound to accord the highest priority to environmental protection among their responsibilities. At the same time, all segments of society—both authorities and the general populace—must stand united and resolute against those who destroy the environment.

#### **2.2.3.5. Public Awareness and Cultural Transformation**

In the thought of Imam Khamenei, genuine protection of the environment can only be achieved when it becomes an integral part of the public culture of society (Imam Khamenei, 8 March 2015, <https://khl.ink/f/29121>). The populace must internalise a deep commitment to environmental preservation, and this consciousness must be cultivated from earliest childhood. Children need to understand the importance of the environment from a very young age and develop a genuine sensitivity toward it (Imam Khamenei, 10 June, 2003, <https://khl.ink/f/3181>, <https://B2n.ir/kw1286>). Imam Khamenei regards active public demand and collective oversight as the ultimate guarantor of environmental conservation. This principle, he notes, is enshrined in upstream policy documents and in the Constitution itself, which declares environmental protection a universal public duty: “We are one of the few countries that have included environmental protection in our constitution. In our constitution, preservation of the environment has been stipulated. This is an important matter. No one should violate this law. This is one of the outstanding features of our constitution” (Imam Khamenei, The Leader’s speeches after planting saplings on the occasion of Tree Planting, March 6, 2023; <https://B2n.ir/dk9635>). This cultural transformation, he emphasises, is deeply rooted in the Quran and the prophetic tradition. Citing the well-known hadith prohibiting

unnecessary harm even in warfare: “Do not commit treachery, do not kill an elderly person, a child, or a woman, and do not cut down trees unless you are compelled to do so”<sup>21</sup> (Kulaynī 1986, 5:27), Imam Khamenei explains that the fundamental principle in Islam is the preservation of nature and the prohibition of inflicting harm—whether upon the elderly, children, women, or the trees of the enemy—except in cases of absolute necessity (Khamenei 2022, *Tafsīr-i sūra-yi Barā’at*, 50).

#### 2.2.3.6. Ethical Guarantees of the Right to a Healthy Environment

According to Imam Khamenei, rights and ethics are closely interconnected (Imam Khamenei, Leader’s Address to MPs, 24 June, 2009; <https://B2n.ir/yy4257>). Rights and ethics are mutually reinforcing and exist in continuity with one another: ethics constitutes the soul of society and determines the direction of human life, while rights express the spirit derived from ethics in the form of rights and duties among social actors and define the orientation of their conduct. Therefore, the presence of social ethics is necessary and indispensable for guaranteeing the right to a healthy environment.

#### 2.2.3.7. Prohibition of Nuclear and Weapons of Mass Destruction

In the thought of Imam Khamenei, the use of nuclear weapons for the purpose of mass killing is categorically forbidden (*ḥarām*) because it entails a massive and indiscriminate violation of human rights, which Islam explicitly prohibited by Islam. He states: “Our Islamic thinking says that a weapon which is used for killing civilians, non-military people and ordinary people is forbidden. It is forbidden, be it nuclear or chemical. Such weapons are forbidden. It is because of the Islamic

<sup>21</sup>. عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ أَظُنُّهُ عَنْ أَبِي حَمْرَةَ الثَّمَالِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: «كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ سَرِيَّةً دَعَاهُمْ فَأَجْلَسَهُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ سِيرُوا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَبِاللَّهِ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَ عَلَى مِلَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ... لَا تَغْدِرُوا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا شَيْحًا قَانِيًا وَلَا صَبِيًّا وَلَا امْرَأَةً وَلَا تَقْطَعُوا شَجَرًا إِلَّا أَنْ تَضْطَرُّوا إِلَيْهَا ...».

viewpoint that we do not want to build a nuclear weapon” (Imam Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with the chairman and members of the Assembly of Experts, February 22, 2021; <https://B2n.ir/eb4062>).

This ruling is rooted in established jurisprudential principles and Quranic verses, particularly: “*No bearer shall bear another’s burden...*”<sup>22</sup> (*Quran 35:18*). The scope of punishment must never extend beyond those who actually deserve it; individuals must not suffer the consequences of sins committed by others. The employment of nuclear weapons repeatedly and on a massive scale violates and negates this principle, inasmuch as it indiscriminately targets vast numbers of human beings without distinction. Moreover, it extends beyond the present generation to future ones, producing persistent, transgenerational, and irreversible harm to entire populations across generations. (Aḥmad Muballighī, *Jurisprudential Grounds for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, 24 April, 2010; <https://khl.ink/f/9222>).

#### 2.2.3.8. Anthropological Dimension

The environmental crisis is fundamentally anthropogenic in origin, and its resolution likewise depends on human agency. Imam Khamenei identifies the root causes of environmental destruction as power-seeking, egoism, selfishness, and a failure to recognise human responsibility toward nature (Imam Khamenei, Supreme Leader’s Friday Prayer Address, 13 October, 2006; <https://B2n.ir/xu8725>). Egoism and disregard for future generations cannot be adequately addressed through legal measures alone. A profound shift in anthropological perspective is required: the human being who views the entire created order, including nature, as a resource to be exploited even if it means wresting rights from God Himself is ontologically and

<sup>22</sup>. ﴿وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى...﴾ (فاطر/١٨)

teleologically distinct from the human being whose purpose of creation aligns with divine purpose. In Imam Khamenei's thought, the right to a healthy environment constitutes an overriding and non-derogable right. To guarantee it, he simultaneously deploys legal, ethical, cultural, educational, and social mechanisms while actively engaging public consciousness and mobilising societal opinion in defence of the environment.

### 3. Comparative Analysis of the Two Approaches

The right to a healthy environment is emphasized both in the international human rights system and in the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei. Both perspectives consider the realization of this right a necessary condition for the survival and continuity of present and future generations and have proposed mechanisms to guarantee it.

As noted earlier, comparative and contrastive studies pursue specific aims. Through the comparisons conducted, it becomes clear whether the examined ideas are in continuity and complementary to each other, mutually reinforcing, or distinct and different from one another.

The present examination shows that the right to a healthy environment in Imam Khamenei's thought is distinct and different from that of the international human rights system. In his thought, this right is explained and expounded in the form of collective rights with the primacy of the collective (*aṣālat al-jamā'ah*), whereas the international system is based on liberal and individualistic philosophy. However, in the Quranic teachings and the anthropological foundation of Imam Khamenei's thought, collective and individual rights stand side by side; the two are complementary, not opposed to each other. Human beings possess individual and collective responsibility in the same way that they possess individual and collective rights.

The international human rights system places excessive emphasis on rights-centredness, removes duty from the human being, negates it, and

places all obligations upon States. In Imam Khamenei's Quranic thought, in addition to the inseparability of individual right and duty, collective responsibility also exists. He strongly criticizes the Western intellectual current that has stripped human-derived ideologies of their prescriptive and proscriptive norms.

Because of its liberal principles and the absence of a divine outlook, the international human rights system regards the human being in a purely material light. It, therefore, confines the scope of the right to a healthy environment to the material dimension of life alone, makes no reference to its spiritual dimension, and thereby blocks human spiritual capacities in this regard. Imam Khamenei, by contrast, taking a divine perspective, places the material and spiritual dimensions of the right to a healthy environment alongside each other and also protects the grounds for spiritual growth and transcendence.

The right to a healthy environment enjoys support from both perspectives, with the difference that the international human rights system places this right within the sphere of soft and non-binding law; it remains closer to a recommendatory and ethical matter than a legal one. In Imam Khamenei's thought, by contrast, the right to a healthy environment benefits from far more comprehensive guarantees than those provided by the international human rights system.

## Conclusion

The foregoing analysis yields the following conclusions:

1. A healthy environment is indispensable for the continuation of human life, has emerged as a major global challenge and common concern, and constitutes one of the foundational concepts of third-generation (solidarity) human rights.
2. The right to a healthy environment is recognized, protected, and guaranteed as a human right both in the international human rights system and in the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei.

3. Due to its individualistic foundations, the international human rights system is unable to provide a fully coherent legal justification for the right to a healthy environment – a quintessentially collective right. Moreover, whereas third-generation rights inherently presuppose the inseparability of right and duty, the international system severs this connection, thereby depriving the right of complete juridical grounding.

4. In the international human rights system, the scope of the right to a healthy environment is confined exclusively to its material dimension, while its spiritual dimension being entirely neglected. In the Quranic thought of Imam Khamenei, by contrast, both the material and the spiritual dimensions are addressed, with particular emphasis placed on an environment free from moral corruption.

5. The guarantees provided for the right to a healthy environment within the international human rights system are notably weak, lacking effective enforcement mechanisms and remaining largely within the domain of soft law. In Imam Khamenei's thought, however, this right draws its authority from divine revelation, belongs to the category of hard, non-derogable rights, and possesses robust and practically effective enforcement mechanisms in the contemporary world.

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