



The Ecological Imperative of *Iḥyā' al-Mawāt*: A Contextual Reinterpretation of Ḥadīth for Critical Land Restoration

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Abstract

This study reorients *iḥyā' al-mawāt* from its classical legal framing as a mechanism of land ownership toward an ethical imperative for critical land restoration amid the climate crisis. The central question is how the tradition's substantive message can ground the restoration of damaged ecological functions in contemporary degraded landscapes. Using a qualitative library-based approach, the study analyzes primary hadith compilations through a contextual lens that integrates Islamic ecotheology with empirical data on environmental degradation. The analysis excavates the text's underlying objectives in relation to ecological well-being. Findings crystallize into three operational dimensions: conservation of productive land to prevent further loss, rehabilitation of degraded terrain to recover ecosystem functions, and sustainable intergenerational utilization of resources. Together, these dimensions offer a spiritually grounded strategy that frames land restoration not as a mere technical undertaking but as a continuous collective calling to nurture and sustain the earth for future generations.

Keywords: critical land restoration; ecological reinterpretation; *iḥyā' al-mawāt*

Introduction

The climate crisis has become one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Rising global temperatures and extreme weather are quietly spreading degraded landscapes that no longer sustain life as they once did (Roy et al., 2024). Human activity has already warmed the planet nearly 1.1°C above preindustrial levels, and projections point toward a 1.5°C rise within two to three decades (Matthews and Wynes, 2022). The consequences cascade far beyond the environmental sector. They disrupt food chains, flood supply routes, displace communities, and erode the cultural and spiritual bonds that tie people to their land. Relying solely on technical remedies is no longer sufficient. A more holistic response is needed, one that draws on cultural memory, social solidarity, and religious imagination to restore both the soil and the sense of stewardship.

Indonesia, where over 87 percent of the population is Muslim, a religious approach carries strategic weight for mobilizing public participation in critical land restoration (Fikri and Colombijn, 2021). Islamic teachings offer a deep reservoir of environmental ethics. The Qur'an calls on humanity to walk gently on the earth, while Prophetic traditions instruct believers to plant trees, conserve water, and show mercy to all living things. This normative foundation has found expression through fatwas, declarations, and environmental pledges across the Muslim world. These instruments frame the protection of nature as a matter of individual conscience and collective duty (Hidayati and Kurniawan, 2022). Among the most relevant concepts for healing damaged landscapes is *iḥyā' al-mawāt*, the act of reviving dead land. Historically a legal mechanism for land acquisition, it now offers a compelling framework for community-based restoration.

The scholarship on *iḥyā' al-mawāt* has largely remained confined to a legal formal fiqh perspective. Classical jurists examined its implications for land tenure, conditions of validity, and proprietary rights (Al-Tahānuwī, 2001). That framework made sense in agrarian societies where access to land defined livelihood. Yet it falls short in an era of systemic climate disruption and the creeping death of fourteen million hectares of critical land across Indonesia (Ridwan, 2021). The challenges we now face transcend individual ownership. They are existential, demanding an ethic of shared responsibility and ecological care. Without a fresh reading, *iḥyā' al-mawāt* risks becoming a relic of legal history rather than a living resource for planetary healing.

Previous studies have explored the intersection of hadith and environmental concern. Wahyuni (2024) confirmed that classical fiqh treatments remained anchored in ownership rather than ecology. Awan et al. (2025) identified conservation impulses in Prophetic teachings but stopped short of linking them to *iḥyā' al-mawāt* or critical land rehabilitation. Kamil (2025) gestured toward a hermeneutical rereading, while Hazar (2022) articulated environmental ethics through *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Khairunnas et al. (2025) proposed an ecological reorientation of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* as a moral mandate aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Nevertheless, no study has yet undertaken a comprehensive textual and contextual analysis that directly connects the hadith of reviving dead land with the concrete, urgent reality of Indonesia's degraded terrains.

This study steps into that gap. It asks three guiding questions. First, how has the hadith on *iḥyā' al-mawāt* been understood in classical and contemporary literature? Second, in what ways can this tradition be reinterpreted as a normative foundation for restoring critical land amid the climate crisis? Third, what contribution might such a reinterpretation make toward broader sustainability goals?

The central argument advanced here is that the meaning of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* must be gently reoriented. It should move beyond a narrow logic of legal appropriation toward a wider horizon of ecological responsibility. Reviving dead land is no longer about staking an individual claim but about restoring the earth's capacity to nurture life for a shared and sustainable future. This shift resonates with a growing body of Islamic ecotheology. It calls upon Muslims to embrace their individual role in confronting climate change, even as the practical pathways for doing so continue to evolve.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative library-based approach grounded in a *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* perspective, which seeks to uncover both the thematic and contextual meanings embedded in Prophetic tradition. Primary sources include the canonical collections of Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Sunan al-Tirmidhī, and Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, with Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim serving as comparative references. These are enriched by secondary literature on Islamic ecotheology, environmental ethics, and contemporary ḥadīth scholarship. Data collection proceeds through systematic documentation using Maktabah Syāmilah software, source verification via takhrīj, and a comprehensive literature review. The analysis weaves together sanad assessment for authenticity, thematic matn interpretation, contextual hermeneutics, and policy linkage with critical land data and government restoration efforts. Triangulation across these varied sources ensures the validity and depth of the findings.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon *ilm ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* as articulated by (Mustaqīm, 2018), an approach that reads Prophetic tradition through its linguistic texture, occasions of utterance, and socio-historical setting in order to grasp its deeper moral message rather than merely its legal form. This interpretive lens is balanced by *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which ensures that any expanded meaning remains anchored in the pursuit of

public welfare or *maṣlahah* (Mustaqim, 2019). Within an ecological horizon, *maṣlahah* widens to embrace the protection of ecosystems as a condition for collective survival. The study further integrates Islamic ecotheology, reframing classical institutions such as *himā* and the Shāfi'i conception of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* as actionable principles for healing degraded land. This synthesis crystallizes into three ecological dimensions: conservation (*ḥifẓ*), rehabilitation (*iṣlāḥ*), and sustainable utilization (*istithmār*), which together offer a theological and practical framework for addressing Indonesia's critical land crisis.

Research Results

Takhrīj, from *kharaja* (to emerge), is the scholarly process of tracing a ḥadīth to its original sources to verify its chain, text, and authenticity (Al-Ṭaḥḥān, 1983). This verification confirms that the tradition on reviving dead land appears in multiple canonical collections with variant wordings yet a unified substantive meaning.

The Ḥadīth Narrated by Abū Dāwūd

Imam Abū Dāwūd narrated this ḥadīth in his *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, in the *Kitāb al-Buyū'*, *Bāb fī Iḥyā' al-Mawāt*, ḥadīth number 3074, as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ حَدَّثَنَا أَيُّوبُ عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ زَيْدٍ
عَنِ النَّبِيِّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ مَنْ أَحْيَا أَرْضًا مَيْتَةً فَهِيَ لَهُ وَلَيْسَ لِعَرِيقٍ ظَلَمَ حَقًّا

"Whoever revives a dead land, it becomes his, and there is no right for the unjust root" (Abū Dāwūd, 2009).

The Ḥadīth Narrated by al-Bukhārī

Imam al-Bukhārī also narrated a similar ḥadīth in his *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, albeit in a slightly different form. In the *Kitāb al-Ḥarth wa al-Muzāra'ah*, it is mentioned:

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بَكْرِ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ عَنْ عُيَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَنْ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ
عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا ... وَقَالَ عُمَرُ: «مَنْ أَحْيَا أَرْضًا مَيْتَةً فَهِيَ لَهُ» وَيُرْوَى عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ عَوْفٍ عَنْ
النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَالَ: «فِي عَرِيقِ حَقِّ مُسْلِمٍ، وَلَيْسَ لِعَرِيقٍ ظَلَمَ فِيهِ حَقٌّ» وَيُرْوَى فِيهِ عَنْ جَابِرِ
عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"Whoever revives a dead land, it becomes his, and there is no right for the unjust root." (Al-Bukhārī, 1987)

The Ḥadīth Narrated by al-Tirmidhī

Imam al-Tirmidhī narrated this ḥadīth in his *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, in the *Kitāb al-Aḥkām, Bāb mā jā'a fī ihyā' al-Mawāt*, ḥadīth number 1378, as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ الثَّقَفِيُّ، قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنَا أَيُّوبُ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ زَيْدٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: مَنْ أَحْيَا أَرْضًا مَيْتَةً فَهِيَ لَهُ وَلَيْسَ لِعِرْقِ ظَلَمٍ حَقٌّ

"Whoever revives a dead land, it becomes his, and there is no right for the unju". (Al-Tirmidhī, 2005)

To assess the authenticity of the *ihyā' al-mawāt* ḥadīth, an *i'tibār* analysis is conducted by tracing all existing chains of transmission to identify corroborating narrations, whether as *mutābi'* (supporting chains at the same Companion level) or *shāhid* (Al-Ṭahḥān, 1983). Examination of the reports from Abū Dāwūd, al-Bukhārī, and al-Tirmidhī reveals two principal Companion paths: one through Sa'īd ibn Zayd and another through 'Ā'ishah, each transmitted via reliable intermediaries such as 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and Hishām ibn 'Urwah. Additional supporting chains from Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh and 'Amr ibn 'Awf further reinforce the tradition's transmission network.

The chains demonstrate complete continuity (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), and every narrator is classified by ḥadīth critics as *thiqah* (trustworthy) and *ḍābiṭ* (possessing strong retention). Noteworthy figures include Sa'īd ibn Zayd, one of the ten promised Paradise, 'Ā'ishah the Mother of the Believers, and meticulous scholars like Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī and al-Layth ibn Sa'd. The analysis uncovers no *shudhūdh* (irregularities) or hidden *'illah* (defects) that would compromise its standing. Consequently, the ḥadīth meets all criteria of *ṣaḥīḥ* authenticity: an unbroken chain, narrators of probity and precision, and freedom from anomaly or defect. This robust verification grants the tradition firm authority to serve as a normative foundation, both for classical legal discussions on land ownership and for the ecological reinterpretation demanded by today's climate crisis.

Classical Understanding of the Ḥadīth on *Ihyā' al-Mawāt* in Fiqh Literature

Etymologically, *ihyā' al-mawāt* combines *ihyā'* (reviving) and *al-mawāt* (dead or uncultivated land). Linguistically, it refers to ownerless, barren terrain that no one utilizes or tends (Shabīr, 2004). In *fiqh* terminology, *al-mawāt* is land neither claimed by any individual nor

designated for public benefit, lying outside residential zones and bearing no trace of prior ownership (Hanifuddin, 2012). Though scholars differ on precise criteria, they concur that such land must be genuinely vacant and unproductive.

The Hanafi school, elaborated by al-Kāsānī in *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i'*, defines *iḥyā' al-mawāt* as cultivating dead land through tangible acts such as building, digging wells, channeling water, planting, or plowing (Al-Kāsānī, 1986). The core requirement is visible effort that transforms barrenness into productivity. Hanafis generally stress obtaining the ruler's permission, though internal debate exists over whether this is an absolute condition or merely sound policy. Mālikī scholars anchor their understanding in the historical practice of Medina. They view *iḥyā'* as a recognized custom since the time of the Companions and Successors, whereby unowned land could be claimed through productive management (Quṭb, 1984). Ibn Rushd, in *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, notes that the Mālikīs are more lenient regarding state permission, arguing that the Prophetic era practice did not always require it, provided public interest remained undisturbed (Ibn Rusyd, 2010).

The Shāfi'i school, as systematized by al-Nawawī in *al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, treats *iḥyā' al-mawāt* as a legally valid cause of ownership (Al-Nawawī, 1990). Three conditions apply: the land must genuinely be *mawāt*; the reviver must have proper intention and lawful means; and the act must involve tangible productivity such as cultivation, construction, or well digging. Al-Shīrāzī adds that ownership entails an ongoing duty to prevent the land from reverting to neglect (Al-Shīrāzī, 1995).

The Hanbalī school offers the most flexible stance. Ibn Qudāmah, in *al-Mughnī*, regards *iḥyā'* as an encouraged practice brimming with *maṣlaḥah* for both individual and community. Ownership is conferred through productive revival, with or without the ruler's permission, unless the land lies near settlements or threatens public welfare, in which case regulatory oversight applies (Ibn Qudāmah, 1985). Hanbalīs further affirm that ownership is absolute and heritable, contingent upon continuous cultivation rather than abandonment.

Conditions for *Iḥyā' al-Mawāt*

Classical scholars also articulated clear conditions to ensure that reviving dead land remains legally valid and aligned with justice and public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). First, the land must genuinely be *mawāt*:

unowned, unused for public benefit, and lying outside residential or protected zones. Ibn Qudāmah emphasizes that cultivating land already owned or designated for public use confers no rights and may constitute unlawful appropriation (*ghaṣb*) (Ibn Qudāmah, 1985).

Second, revival must proceed through means recognized by Islamic law, such as clearing, plowing, building, digging wells, or planting. Al-Kāsānī notes that the precise form of *iḥyā'* varies with the land's intended use; for agriculture it entails plowing and irrigation, while for settlement it involves construction or fencing. The essential element is a tangible, productive transformation of the land (Al-Kāsānī, 1986).

Third, the reviver must act with sound intention and without causing harm. The maxim *lā ḍarara wa lā ḍirār* (no harm inflicted or reciprocated) underpins this condition. One may not block public pathways, disrupt shared water sources, or degrade ecosystems that sustain the community. Individual rights acquired through *iḥyā'* must never override collective welfare or public rights (Rusli, 2008).

Fourth, while opinions differ on its absolute necessity, obtaining the ruler's permission is widely recommended, especially when the land lies near settlements or may spark disputes. Al-Nawawī clarifies that such permission is not a strict condition of validity but a prudent measure to prevent conflict, ensure equitable distribution, and safeguard the common good (Al-Nawawī, 1990).

Discussion

Moving beyond the classical legal framing of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* requires a contextual reinterpretation that honors tradition while responding to the climate crisis. Such reinterpretation does not discard established rulings but expands their moral horizon to meet contemporary ecological realities. Within *ma'ānī al-ḥadīth* this is essential, since the text is finite while human challenges evolve endlessly (Mustaqim, 2018). Several methodological anchors guide this effort. First, the *maqāṣid* approach seeks the Prophet's deeper objectives behind the tradition, asking whether the primary aim was merely to grant ownership or more fundamentally to promote land productivity, earth's prosperity, and intergenerational sustainability (Mustaqim, 2019). Second, contextualization reads the seventh-century agrarian context alongside today's degraded critical lands, recognizing that "dead land" now includes terrains ruined by overexploitation and ecological disaster (Budiharta and Holl, 2025). If the primary purpose

of *ihyā'* is to prosper the earth and encourage land productivity, then in the contemporary context, restoring critical lands to become ecologically productive is the most relevant form of *ihyā'*. Third, genuine reinterpretation must integrate modern environmental science and policy data to ensure empirical grounding. Fourth, the principle *al-muḥāfaẓatu 'alā al-qadīmi al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadīdi al-aṣlah* safeguards classical wisdom while embracing new, more fitting responses, allowing both to coexist and complement one another (Kamali, 2018).

Three Ecological Dimensions of *Ihyā' al-Mawāt*

The first dimension is *ihyā' bi al-ḥifẓ*, which means reviving land by protecting it from damage and maintaining its ecological functions. In this perspective, "reviving dead land" does not always mean carrying out physical intervention on the land, but also includes preventive efforts to prevent living land from becoming dead (Quddus, 2015). The conservation of productive land to prevent it from degrading into critical land is a crucial form of *ihyā'*, especially amidst the increasingly massive pressure of natural resource exploitation.

This concept has deep roots in the Islamic tradition, particularly in the practice of *ḥimā* (protected areas) which has been known since the time of the Prophet. *Ḥimā* refers to the designation of certain areas as protected zones, where the utilization of natural resources is strictly regulated to preserve their sustainability. The Prophet Muhammad himself established a *ḥimā* area around Medina to protect pastures and water sources (Zuhaylī, 1984). In the contemporary context, *ihyā' bi al-ḥifẓ* can be implemented through the establishment of conservation areas, protected forests, national parks, and other protected zones aimed at preserving ecosystem sustainability and preventing productive land from turning into critical land.

Data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) indicates that the area of conservation forest in Indonesia reaches approximately 27.4 million hectares, or about 14.5% of Indonesia's total land area. These areas play an important role in maintaining ecosystem balance, protecting biodiversity, and preventing broader land degradation (Nugroho et al., 2023). However, the challenges faced are not insignificant. Pressure from deforestation, encroachment into protected areas, and illegal land conversion still occur in various regions. In this context, reinterpreting *ihyā' al-mawāt* as a conservation

imperative provides a strong theological foundation for efforts to protect protected areas. Keeping forests sustainable, preventing illegal encroachment, and maintaining the ecological functions of land are forms of "reviving land" that are equivalent to cultivating dead land into productive land.

Furthermore, *iḥyā' bi al-ḥifẓ* also includes efforts to maintain existing productive lands so that they do not transform into critical lands. Environmentally friendly agricultural practices, sustainable soil management, and avoiding over-exploitation are part of *iḥyā'* in the conservation dimension (Thohir et al., 2023). From this perspective, farmers who care for their land properly, maintain soil fertility, and do not excessively use chemical fertilizers are, in fact, practicing *iḥyā' bi al-ḥifẓ*. Similarly, indigenous communities that practice local wisdom in forest and land management also contribute to *iḥyā'* in the conservation dimension.

The second dimension, *iḥyā' bi al-iṣlāḥ*, shifts the meaning of reviving dead land toward rehabilitating critical and degraded terrains. Where classical *iḥyā'* conferred individual ownership through cultivation, this expanded reading aims at restoring the land's full ecological functions for collective benefit. The "Go Green" impulse within the tradition underscores that Islam has long recognized environmental stewardship as a spiritual duty (Hirjin, 2024). This reinterpretation thus frames land restoration not as a single act of reclamation but as an ongoing, collaborative commitment sustained across generations.

Critical land is defined as land that has experienced physical, chemical, or biological degradation, resulting in a drastic decline in its function as a production medium and water regulator. These lands not only lose their productivity for agricultural or other human uses but also contribute significantly to carbon emissions, accelerate the loss of biodiversity, and increase the risk of hydrometeorological disasters such as floods, landslides, and droughts. Rehabilitating these lands to make them productive again is an urgent ecological imperative that requires immediate and sustained action (Stanturf, 2021). Therefore, rehabilitating critical land is not only an environmental necessity dictated by scientific evidence but also a moral imperative deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, as it preserves the earth's resources for future

generations and fulfills the fundamental human responsibility as stewards (*khalīfah*) entrusted with the care and protection of the planet.

From the perspective of *iḥyā' bi al-iṣlāḥ*, critical land rehabilitation employs various proven methods. Reforestation with native trees and agroforestry systems that integrate woody plants with crops are primary steps, particularly near settlements (Marti Winarni and Anang Susanto, 2025). Soil and water conservation measures such as terracing, check dams, and infiltration wells address root causes of degradation. Modern techniques like bioremediation also align with this ecological reading of revival.

Beyond ecological recovery, rehabilitation yields significant social and economic benefits. Restored land supports agriculture, plantations, and community forestry, enhancing local welfare and resilience. Government social forestry programs illustrate how legal access coupled with conservation practices can revitalize both ecosystems and community livelihoods. This dimension thus embodies sustainable development, harmonizing ecological health with human flourishing within an integrative Islamic environmental ethic.

The third dimension, *iḥyā' bi al-istithmār*, emphasizes sustainable utilization of revived land without compromising its ecological functions. Revival does not end with the initial act of cultivation; it entails an ongoing commitment to preserve the land's productivity across generations, transforming a one-time deed into an intergenerational responsibility (Yunus, 2020). This principle resonates deeply with Islamic values. The Qur'an repeatedly cautions against spreading corruption on earth after its good order, and Prophetic teachings explicitly prohibit polluting water sources, felling trees wantonly, or harming creatures without just cause.

Wise land use within this framework must therefore respect environmental carrying capacity and avoid the kind of excessive exploitation that would ultimately return the land to a dead condition. Practical expressions of this dimension include organic agriculture that safeguards long-term soil health and biodiversity, integrated farming systems that combine crops, livestock, and fish to create enriching nutrient cycles, and ecotourism that generates economic value while preserving ecosystems. Even traditional practices like shifting cultivation, when pursued with adequate fallow periods, reflect this ethos of measured, respectful use.

At the policy level, *iḥyā' bi al-istithmār* calls for robust regulation. Environmental impact assessments prior to development, sustainable forest management certification, and firm enforcement against destructive practices are all instruments aligned with this spirit. Genuine community participation in monitoring and managing land is equally essential, ensuring that utilization benefits not merely a few parties but safeguards the common interest over the long term. Such measures translate the ethical imperative of sustainability into practical mechanisms that protect both present livelihoods and the ecological inheritance of future generations.

Relevance of the Reinterpretation to Critical Land Data in Indonesia

Indonesia holds approximately 14 million hectares of degraded land that offers minimal ecological or human benefit. Deforestation has accelerated this loss: since 1990, 25 percent of old-growth forests have disappeared, intact forest areas declined up to 45 percent, and nearly half of cleared land remains idle over five years due to speculation and governance failure (Parker et al., 2024). This confirms that the hadith's "dead land" now denotes terrain stripped of ecological function, not merely vacant ground. In the Middle Citarum Watershed, annual soil erosion reaches 23.16 million tons, averaging 102.01 tons per hectare, driven chiefly by vegetation loss and poor conservation (Karolinoerita et al., 2023). Hence preserving existing cover under *iḥyā' bi al-ḥifẓ* and the *ḥimā* tradition is as urgent as replanting.

Peatland degradation exacerbates the climate crisis. Indonesia possesses the fourth largest peatland area globally, and drainage converts these carbon stores into emission sources. Rewetting oil palm plantations on degraded peatlands can cut heterotrophic CO₂ emissions by 34 percent and total respiration by 20 percent, contributing up to 13 percent of Indonesia's natural climate mitigation potential (Novita et al., 2024). Such rewetting embodies *iḥyā' bi al-iṣlāḥ* by restoring hydrological and ecological functions, demonstrating alignment between hadith reinterpretation and scientific climate strategy. Agrarian conflicts further expose the inadequacy of classical ownership frameworks. In 2024 alone, 295 conflicts covered over 1.1 million hectares, a 21.9 percent increase from the previous year, mostly in forest areas where state and customary law overlap (Patiung et al., 2025). An ecological reinterpretation shifts the question from ownership to restoration of common benefit and ecosystem health, directing

conflict resolution beyond certification toward ecological and social justice.

Government policy targets FOLU Net Sink 2030, aiming for a land sector that absorbs more carbon than it emits. In February 2026, Indonesia and Norway launched a fourth-phase community grant program worth IDR 7 billion for local nonprofits, indigenous communities, and universities. Here *iḥyā' al-mawāt* functions as an enabler, providing spiritual capital to sustain participation beyond project cycles. A study in Bengkalis, Riau confirms that community-focused participatory approaches succeed where top-down interventions fail. When restoration is framed as a spiritual calling to prosper the earth, intrinsic motivation emerges, fostering resilience that outlasts policy shifts and embodies the stewardship of *khalīfah* on Earth (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study yields three principal conclusions. First, classical fiqh readings of *iḥyā' al-mawāt* center narrowly on legal ownership procedures, leaving ecological concerns unaddressed. Second, an ecological reinterpretation expands the tradition into three actionable dimensions: *iḥyā' bi al-ḥifẓ* (conservation of productive land), *iḥyā' bi al-iṣlāḥ* (rehabilitation of degraded terrain), and *iḥyā' bi al-istithmār* (sustainable intergenerational use). These dimensions offer a theological framework responsive to Indonesia's critical land realities while aligning with government restoration policies. Third, further field research on community implementation, integration of Islamic social finance instruments like waqf and zakat, and comparative studies across Muslim-majority nations are recommended to deepen practical application.

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