

FOREST DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION IN LIGHT OF THE SHARĪ'AH AND THE STATUTORY PROVISIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

The texts of the Sharī'ah (Islamic law) attended keenly to all matters that will bring benefit and value to people's religious and worldly affairs. Since the constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is premised on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, the Laws of the Kingdom in general and the ones related to the development and protection of forests in particular are consequently derived from the texts of the Sharī'ah. Hence, this paper shows the statutory provisions in the Kingdom being an extension of the texts of the Sharī'ah, and the attention of the Saudi Arabian government to the development and protection of the forests, based on the chief statutory sources – the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah- and the enacted statutory provisions on the forests.

Keywords: forests development – Sharī'ah – Saud Arabia – Qur'ān– Ḥadīth – statutory provisions.

INTRODUCTION

From the favours of the Creator on human is the creation of earth for their benefit, and its perfect beatification, such that the necessary, needed, luxurious, and additional interests of human will be guaranteed. Undoubtedly, the components of the environment, including the forests, are part of what beautify the earth, as mentioned by Almighty God in the Qur'ān, when He said: “He Who has perfected everything which He has created” [Al-Sajdah, Q 32 v 7].

The texts of the Sharī'ah, its maxims, objectives, generalities and specifics, absolutes and restricted, its apparent and inferred connotations, all have pointed the necessity of developing the components of the environment generally, and the forests in particular, due to the consequential impact of such on achieving the essential objectives of the existence on earth. And considering the fact that the constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was premised on the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, certain laws have been enacted to cater for the components of the environment in general, and for the development of the forests and their protection in particular. Hence, the Ministry of Agriculture laid down “Strategy and National Forestry Plan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, while the Kingdom's Vision 2030 also proposed several projects and initiatives for forests in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Green Middle East. Also, The National Center for Vegetation Development was established, for supervising the management and investment in rangelands, forests and national park, and the conservation of plant genetic resources and vegetation outside the protected areas in its total environments, and the combating of desertification, and the Center engages in several activities, including: the initiative to develop the

capacity to prepare for drought, and mitigating its severity in the Kingdom, the Center has also commissioned monitoring patrols and drones for keeping surveillance on encroachments and illegal actions on the forests, and for detecting and apprehending the perpetrators, in order to take the appropriate measures against them in line with the provisions of the Environmental Law, the Center also participates in the International Day of Forests on March 21.

In order to shed light on the attention given by the texts of the Sharī'ah and its maxims and objectives to all that is capable of facilitating the benefits of all creatures in general and the forests in particular, and the attention of the Saudi regulator to this issue from the perspective of the constitution of the country regarding the protection of the components of the environment in general and the forests in particular, the researchers decided to write this paper titled: **“Forest Development and Protection in Light of the Shari’ah and the Statutory Provisions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”**.

RESEARCH IMPORTANCE AND ITS RATIONALE:

In addition to what has been mentioned earlier, the importance of the topic and its rationale could be fathomed from the following:

- Underscoring the attention given by the Islamic Sharī'ah to the development and protection of forests.
- Underscoring the comprehensiveness of the Sharī'ah in addressing a part of life.
- Highlighting the eagerness of the Islamic Sharī'ah on safeguarding everything that will protect the earth and beautify it.
- Highlighting the attention given by the statutory provision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the development and protection of forests.
- Emphasizing the fact that the Saudi regulator relies on the constitution of the country which was premised on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- Contributing to disseminating the awareness about the necessity of the development and protection of the forests.
- Highlighting the role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in paying attention to the development and protection of the forests.
- Highlighting the fact that the statutory provision is an extension of the Sharī'ah provisions on giving the legal backup for the development and protection of the forests.
- Underlining what distinguishes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constitutionally and regulatory-wise on the development and protection of the forests.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

The limitations of the research are confined to the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and the Saudi laws related to the forests.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS:

These problems can be succinctly represented in the following question?

- How did the Sharī'ah texts justify the development and protection of the forests?
- Does the constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia give attention to the development and the protection of the forests?
- Has the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia enacted laws specifically for the development and the protection of the forests?
- What are the contributions of Saudi Arabia to the development and the protection of the forests?

LITERATURE REVIEW:

There are various scholarly literatures on the issue of forests and the environment and its components, whether in form of academic researches or others. However, the current paper is distinguished from the previous literatures by drawing correlation between the issue of development and protection of the forests and the general and specific texts of the Sharī'ah and the extant statutory provisions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research relied on the simple inductive method, in addition to the descriptive method on the derived observations, this was done through a painstaking consideration of the most significant texts of the Sharī'ah related to the topic of the research and the extant statutory provisions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia related to the development and the protection of the forests.

RESEARCH PLAN:

The research was divided into an introduction, a preface and two topics.

The Introduction: Which is the current part, it contains the importance of the topic and its rationale, and its objectives, and the research problems, and its limitations, and the literature review, and the methodology of the research and its plan.

The Preface: On highlighting the terminologies of the research topic, and the significance of the forests, discussed under the following issues:

Issue One: Highlighting the Concept of Sharī'ah And the Statutory Provisions In the Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia.

Issue Two: Definition of the Term "Forests".

Issue Three: Highlighting the Significance of the Forests and Its Space and Types In the Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia.

Topic One: Highlighting the Texts that Justify the Development and the Protection of the Forests.

Topic Two: Highlighting the Texts of the Statutory Provisions that Justify the Development and the Protection of the Forests.

The Conclusion: The most significant findings and recommendations of the research.

PREFACE:

The constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is premised on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and the country premises its executive regulations meant for guiding any form of work in the country and in safeguarding the interests of the country and the protection of the citizens in light of the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and the maxims and objectives therein. This becomes apparent from provision of Article One of the Basic Law of Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1992) which states that: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its constitution is Almighty Allah's Book, The Glorious Qur'an, and the Sunnah (Traditions) of the Prophet (PBUH). Arabic is the language of the Kingdom...", and in Article Seven of the same Law, it was stated that: "Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), which are the ultimate sources of reference for this Law and the other laws of the State".

Based on this, the meaning of Sharī'ah texts in this paper is: the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah which justify the development and protection of the forests either generally or specifically, absolutely or restricted, expressly or inferred. The prominent medieval Islamic authority, Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 1328), stated that: "The word 'text' (*naṣṣ*) at times is used to mean the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, whether the connotation of the text is definitive or just apparent, and this is the meaning of the statement of whoever said: the texts [of the Sharī'ah] are meant to address the rulings of the actions of the legally liable persons" (Ibn Taimiyyah, 1995, 19: 288).

As for the statutory provisions on the development of the forests and their protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, they can be summarized in the following:

- 1- The Pastures and Forests Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/55 dated 10/29/1425 AH.
- 2- The National Strategy and Action Plan for Forests in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, and approved by the Council of Ministers for the period 1426-1446 AH by Resolution No. 306 dated 12/23/1426 AH, and the strategy exists in approximately 177 pages.
- 3- The Environment Law, issued on 11/19/1441 AH, corresponding to 07/10/2020.

ISSUE TWO: DEFINITION OF THE TERM "FORESTS".

In Arabic, the term "forest" is referred to as "*gābah*" (pl. *gābāt*), which lexically means: a place with thick and interwoven plants. The Arabic word for forests can be etymologically traced to the word "*gayyaba*" which denotes hiding something from being seen, and forests were named so because they cover what is inside them from being seen (Ibn al-Athīr, 1979).

The Word "*gābah*" (forest) was narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī in the ḥadīth regarding the making of the pulpit of the Prophet (PBUH): It was mentioned that some people approached Sahl bin Sa'd al-Sā'idī, when they were in doubt regarding the kind of wood from which the pulpit was made, this made them inquire from him, and he replied them saying: By Allaah, I know from which wood it was, I have seen it the first day it was made, and the first day the Prophet (PBUH) sat on it. The Prophet (PBUH) sent to a woman –among the *Ansār* (natives of Madinah) whose name was mentioned by Sa'd- that: "instruct your carpenter servant to make some woods for me on which I

will be sitting whenever I address people”, she then instructed him, and he made it from the tamarisk tree sourced from the forest, after which he then brought it, and it was sent to the Prophet (PBUH) who instructed that it be placed here, then I saw the Prophet (PBUH) praying on it. He did the *takbīr* (praising of God) while standing on it, and then bended while standing on it, after which he then moved backwards and prostrate on the foot of the pulpit, and then returned to his earlier position, and when he was done he faced the people and said: “Oh people, I did what I did so that you can imitate and learn from my prayer” (Bukhārī, no. 917, Muslim, no. 544, Ibn Hajar, 1960, M. Ashraf, 1996). Ibn Hajar (d. 1449) said: “*al-Gābah* is a place in ‘Awālī area in Madīnah towards the direction of the Levant, it is also the name of a village in Bahrain, its origin is from any interwoven group of plants” (1960, 2: 399).

Technically, forests in the legal parlance was defined in Article One of the Pastures and Forests Law as: “A group of plantations formed from a type or different types of trees or plants, or weeds, either uniform or mixed, with a plant volume not less than 10%, whether the group is natural or planted”. It may also be defined as: “The lands where trees or plants grow naturally, or where the government plants with the aim of protecting the soil and watershed and for the protection of the environment, owned by the government, including the villages forests”.

ISSUE THREE: HIGHLIGHTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORESTS AND ITS SPACE AND TYPES IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA.

Forests are of great significance, due to their wide impact on human and animal lives directly or indirectly, they are also regarded habitats for several wild animals, especially the rare ones. Forests also have influence on the climate, as their existence in a particular place will make the temperature of such place to be more conducive, and it absorbs large amounts of various air pollutants such as CO₂ (carbon di-oxide) from the atmosphere and the release of O₂ (oxygen) during photosynthesis, since one hectare of forest can absorb between 220 to 280 kilograms of CO₂ and release between 180 to 240 kilograms of O₂, and it also helps in absorbing and purifying dust, as one hectare of forest filters about 18 million cubic meters of air annually, and green parts contribute to reducing the number of solid air pollutants around cities and industrial areas by 100 to 1000 times and can hold from 40 to 80 suspended particles, and dense forests and trees help reduce wind speed that raises dust, which leads to a decrease in pollution to 40%, and it helps to intensify clouds and increase the chances of precipitation, especially in high altitude areas.

The forests have continued to serve the purpose of supplying the needed pastures for the domestic and wild animals that convert the plant to meats and dairy products for human consumption, and they give room for the adequate environment for pastoral plants to grow around them, they also provide shade and habitat for animals, and all of this provide the human with the necessary and the non-necessary needs for survival.

Also, the forests play key roles in tourist development, considering them to be one of the natural sources of environmental tourism which is regarded one of the most thriving sectors of the current decade, and this contribute to creating more job opportunities for the local communities where the forests are found (SNFP, 2005).

The fact that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is blessed with diverse landscape and different types of forests cannot be underestimated, even though they occupy a relatively small portion of the Kingdom's land mass, they are however natural treasure trove of great significance, and despite the diversity in the climate systems of the Kingdom between a sharp climate in the interior continental regions to a humid climate in the western highlands and the different topography and the Kingdom's falling under different air currents such as the summer monsoons laden with rain in the southwest of the Kingdom and the north-eastern dry winds from Central Asia in the winter and the Mediterranean winds in the spring. All of these factors led to a large diversity of plant species, with trees, shrubs, and perennial plants being prevalent in the rainy regions, while the dry regions either grow annual crops or remain devoid of greenery, a total number of 142 plant families comprising 2243 plant species have been recorded throughout the various parts of the Kingdom. Natural pasture plants cover 171 million hectares to feed just under 13 million heads of domestic animals, in addition to the wild animals, representing 71% of the total area of the Kingdom, while forest lands cover only approximately 2.7 million hectares, or 1.2% of the total area of the Kingdom. At a time when pasture lands are spread around most parts of the Kingdom, forests are concentrated in the south-western part on the Sarawat mountain range, and a small number of them are found in the meadows and valleys in other regions of the Kingdom.

Diverse types of natural forests are found in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and most of the forests are concentrated in the mountainous areas extending from the Hejaz Mountains in the north to the Aseer Mountains in the south. The heights of these mountains range from 1000 meters to more than 3500 meters in the south towards Abha. The region's humid climate, with more than 300 mm of rain distributed well throughout the year, helps in the growth of trees, and the trees in turn help in softening the local environment by reducing evaporation and maintaining high relative humidity. The distribution of tree species follows that gradient, and their different configurations are divided into the following groups:

A - Juniper Forests:

Dense forests of evergreen wild trees grow on the peaks and heights of the Hejaz and Aseer mountains, at an altitude of more than 2000 meters, and are dominated by Phoenician juniper trees in the north and the Greek juniper trees in the Aseer regions in the south, while the two species are mixed in some areas of Taif, which are characterized by a climate influenced by overlapping air currents. The juniper grows alone at high altitudes and mixes with the wild olive "Al-Atm" to an altitude of 1700 meters, and many different plant species also exist with it.

B- Wild Olive Forests «Al-Atm»:

They grow in the area which ranges between 1,500-2,000 meters in altitude, they are an evergreen broad-leaved forests, and the dark trees of Al-Atm dominate this area and give it its general appearance.

At the top of this area Al-Atm exists with juniper trees up to a height of 1700 meters above sea level, then it continues similarly with another group of trees, and some types of biting species of the genus acacia, resistant to cold, begin to appear on these heights.

C - Forests in Low-Altitude Mountains:

Deciduous forests grow in the mountains, whose height ranges between 1000-1500 meters above sea level, and consist of different plant groups, which are of medium density at the edge of the Al-Atm forests, they then continue to spread towards the inner plateaus in a less dense manner and are dominated by vegetation consisting of acacia and balsam, and the density of the trees increases with this composition, especially the acacia and balsam groups, with some associated species such as dill, tabaq, and others.

These mountain forests in the cold and semi-cold region constitute the vast majority of forests in the Kingdom, as their area is 2,150,000 hectares, which is equal to about 80% of the total forests.

D - Semi-Warm Forests:

Groups of trees grow in separate forms on the slopes and valleys on the western side of the Sarawat Mountains and are distributed in the Tihama to the Red Sea coast on an estimated area of 130,000 hectares. The most important types are: al-Samr, al-Salam, al-Sarh, some types of balsam, and arak bushes. This group constitutes about 5% of the natural forests in the Kingdom..

E- Swamp Forests and Pastoral Valleys:

These trees grow sporadic on the banks of the valleys, in the swamps and the watery areas in various parts of the Kingdom, and their types are shaped according to the nature of the region in terms of soil and climate. These forests include acacia species, tamarisk species, arak, lote tree, al-Ghada, aurate, and many types of pastoral trees and shrubs.

F- Shura Forests (Mangroves):

Shura forests are spread in many tidal areas on the coasts of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf, and they consist of Shura trees, which are considered the dominant and most widespread, and alder trees which is found in small quantities on the shore of the Red Sea and is considered rare on the shore of the Arabian Gulf. These trees are resistant to saline conditions and are submerged in sea water, but most of them are found at the mouths of freshwater valleys, where these valleys carry soil rich in silt and organic matter to their mouths on the sea and the Gulf, and stimulate wildlife and the movement of camel grazing in such areas. Most of the Shura forests are located on the Red Sea coast, spreading between latitudes 25 and 27 degrees, from Jazan in the south to Al-Wajh and Duba in the north. The area of this type of forest ranges from 2000 to 6000 hectares. There is also a presence of it on the coast of the Arabian Gulf, but it is less dense than on the coast of the Red Sea.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gives attention to the artificial (cultivated) forests. The Kingdom is characterized by vast areas and a clear variety in its environments, which are generally characterized by drought and lack of forest cover, except for the south-western part of it. The need to increase the extent of forests arose from a long time ago, in order to stop the encroachment of sand, and to protect farms by reducing the temperature, as well as limiting the wind speed to reduce evaporation and transpiration, and to combat soil erosion as a result of rains, which are often in strong showers that cause torrential rains and erosion of the soil surface. The need for it also appeared in the need to improve the quality of the residential environment by vegetating streets in cities and villages and designating places for picnics and refreshment. In light of these circumstances, the Ministry of Agriculture started the program of afforestation, forest

improvement, sand sequestration, and sand dune stabilization by implementing a sand sequestration project in Al-Ahsa Governorate in the Eastern Province in 1962, where sand encroachment on a 25-km-long front ranged between 25-30 hectares per year, destroying agricultural lands and residential areas along the front and a width ranging between 220-1000 meters. The cultivated area of the project amounted to 1560 hectares, planted with 11 million seedlings and cuttings in form of four sand bumpers parallel to the main bumper, and it is considered a successful project. It was converted into a national park after the goal of its establishment was fulfilled. In 1966, the Ministry began cultivating some natural sites that had lost their vegetation cover with forest trees, where some fast-growing species were used. Cultivated areas reached 56 sites as at year 2000, in which more than a million seedlings were planted. The Ministry of Agriculture cooperated with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in afforestation of streets within cities and villages within the framework of the annual tree planting week or through independent projects. The total number of seedlings provided by the Ministry of Agriculture only for tree planting weeks amounted to more than 13 million seedlings during the period 1988-2000.

The Ministry of Agriculture has established a number of greenhouses throughout the Kingdom with a production capacity of one million seedlings per year. The Ministry plans to establish five central greenhouses to cover its needs of forest seedlings in the Kingdom.

TOPIC ONE: HIGHLIGHTING THE SHARĪ'AH TEXTS THAT JUSTIFY THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROTECTION OF THE FORESTS.

Almighty God created everything with predestination and with certain gauge and perfection, and everything was made to harness the benefit of human, and nothing was created without a purpose, rather they were created for a particular wisdom and for lofty purposes, Almighty Allaah said: "And everything with Him is by due measure"[Ar-Ra'd:8], Al-Bagawī (d. 1122) said in his exegesis of the verse: "Meaning: with a unique predestination, such that it cannot escape it and will never cease to catch up with it" (Al-Bagawī, 1999, 4: 298), Almighty Allaah said: "And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve, so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire"[Sād:27], and He also said: "And We did not create the heaven and earth and that between them in play"[Al-Anbiyā':16].

Hence, if it is clear that God did not create anything aimlessly, and among these creatures is the different components of the environment, including the forests, it then became imperative that the Sharī'ah texts regarding the development and protection of these forests are keenly considered, due the realization of the objectives behind the creation of these forests depending on this, which eventually culminate in the benefit of humankind. The Sharī'ah texts have encouraged benefiting from what God has created and facilitated without trifling with them, Almighty Allah said: "It is He who made the earth tame for you - so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision - and to Him is the resurrection"[Al-Mulk:15]. Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) said in the exegesis of the verse: "He -Most High- mentioned His grace on His creatures on making the earth stable and subservient for them and taming it for their benefit, by making it a stable planet that does not extend or disturb,

due to the mountains He had created therein, and He the waters created therein, and the pathways, and the benefits and places for the crops and the fruits [to grow]” (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, 8: 179).

Also, Almighty Allah said: “And cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation” [Al-A‘rāf:56], Almighty Allaah created the earth and made it conducive with all that will guarantee the interest of the creatures, like the trees, the valleys, etc, Ibn ‘Atiyyah (d. 1146) mentioned in his exegesis of the verse: “Al-Ḍaḥāk (d. 684) said: It means do not corrupt the clean water and do not cut a fruitful tree out of corruption” (Ibn ‘Atiyyah, 1997, 2: 410).

Almighty Allah also said while condemning those who perpetrate corruption and on the earth: “And when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. And Allāh does not like corruption”[Al-Baqarah:205], Ibn Khathīr (d. 1373) said: “Such hypocrite has no mission other than corrupting the earth, and destroying the vegetation where crops and fruits are grown, and animals that are essential to human life” (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, 1: 564), it was also mentioned that the verse was revealed because of al-Ahknas al-Thaqafī when he went by a donkey and hacked it to death, and went by a plantation and burnt it, *al-Ḥarth* in the verse means: a plantation, while *al-Nasl* means: the child of the animal (Ibn Al-Sam‘ānī, 1997).

Also, Almighty Allah said while warning against the misuse of His favours: “Ask the Children of Israel how many a sign of evidence We have given them. And whoever exchanges the favor of Allāh [for disbelief] after it has come to him - then indeed, Allāh is severe in penalty” [Al-Baqarah:211]. These and other several texts point to the imperativeness of using the favours of God in the nature judiciously and refraining from corrupting them, and the fact that the consequences of such corruption will not augur well, and that one of the most significant of these favours is the green cover in form of plants and trees, and this is why Almighty Allah enumerated his favours on the creatures by saying: “And we have sent down from the sky, rain and produced thereby categories of various plants”[Tā-ha:53], meaning: various plants from crops and fruits, sour and sweet, and all others, then Almighty Allah said: “Eat [therefrom] and pasture your livestock” [Tā-ha:54], meaning: for your food and fruit, and for your animals for their sustenance, green and dry”, then Allaah said: “Indeed in those are signs for those of intelligence” [Tā-ha:54]. The same way the texts of the Qur’an in the generality of its express and implied connotations have justified the development and protection of the forest, in the interest of the humankind and for safeguarding their necessities, and needs, and the complementary of both, and whatever will bring them luxuries and so on, in the same vein, the Prophetic Sunnah in the generality and specifics of its express connotations or its absolute and the restricted, have all pointed to what will ensure the development and protection of the forests.

Due to this, al-Bukhārī (d. 870) in his Ṣaḥīḥ has a chapter titled: “The Virtue of Sowing Seeds and Planting Trees that Are Edible, and the Words of Almighty Allah: “And have you seen that [seed] which you sow? Is it you who makes it grow, or are We the grower?” [Al-Wāqī‘ah:63 - 64]”, he then narrated the statement of the Prophet (PBUH) where he said: “There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him” (Bukhārī, no. 2320, Muslim, no. 1553), and Ibn Ḥajar

(d. 1449) said in his commentary on the ḥadith: “The ḥadith shows the virtue of planting and sowing seeds and encourages the development of the earth” (Ibn Ḥajar, 1960, 4: 5).

This is an express text on enjoining planting vegetation and its development, and the texts of the Shāri’ah are copious regarding encouraging the planting of whatever is beneficial until the Final Hour, and among the narrations that buttresses this meaning is the report of Imām Aḥmad (d. 855) in his *al-Musnad* regarding the ḥadith of Anas bin Mālik (d. 709), who narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “If the Final Hour comes while one of you has a shoot of a plant in his hand, he should plant it” (Aḥmad, no. 12902, Al-Albānī, 1995: 9).

Also, just as the texts of the Sunnah were explicit on encouraging the development of forests, they have also warned against corrupting or destroying the forests, on the authority of Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 750), narrating from his father who said: “The Prophet (PBUH) prohibited destroying trees, because they are safe havens for animals during droughts” (Abdur Razāq, no. 9378), this ḥadith is an explicit text regarding the prohibition of reckless cutting of trees, because the green trees are living things just like human beings and animals.

On the authority of ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), who said: Whenever the Messenger of Allah sends an army of Muslims to the unbelievers, he would say: “Go ahead in the Name of Allah”, he then mentioned the ḥadith, which includes: “Do not kill a child, nor a woman, nor an old man, do not block any spring, do not destroy any tree except a tree that prevents you from fighting or the one that blocks you from the unbelievers, do not mutilate any human being or an animal, and do not engage in treachery, or theft from war booties” (Al-Baihaqī, no. 18155, who said: “this is a chain that contains omission and weakness, although it can be consolidated considering its supportive proofs and the injunction therein). Hence, if this is an injunction meant to be followed in the land of the enemies during a warfare, then how much more should it be in respect to the lands of the Muslims?!

Also, it was reported on the authority of ‘Abdullāh bin Ḥabashī, who narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Whoever cuts a lote-tree will have his head dipped in the Hell-Fire” (Abū Dāwūd, no. 5239, and authenticated by Al-Albānī, no. 6476). Abū Dāwūd (d. 889) was asked regarding the meaning of this Ḥadīth, and he replied: “This is a succinct ḥadith, and it means whoever cuts the lote-tree in the desert which is being used as shade by the passers-by, and the animals, out of recklessness and injustice and without any justifiable grounds in doing so, such person will have his head dipped in the Hell-Fire” (Abū Dāwūd, N.D, 4: 361).

The same way the texts of the Sunnah has explicitly mentioned the development and protection of the forests, there are other texts that also point in terms of their generality and inferred connotations to the development and protection of the forests, including: the ḥadith reported by Ibn Mājah (d. 886) on the authority of ‘Ubādah bin al-Ṣāmit (d. 655), who mentioned the Prophet (PBUH) to have said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm” (Ibn Mājah, no. 2340, al-Albānī, 1985, no. 896). The ḥadith is general, where the Prophet (PBUH) was warning against inflicting any harm, and it is undisputable that encroaching on the forests by destroying it or neglecting their protection and development are all forms of harm to the environment and its components, whether to humans or animals or plants.

Among these texts also is the report of Imām Muslim (d. 875) on the authority of ‘Abdullāh bin Mas’ūd (d. 650), who narrated the Prophet (PBUH) to have said: “Indeed Allāh is beautiful, and He loves beauty” (Muslim, no. 91). Giving adequate attention to the forests and their development brings some sort of beauty to the environment which is included in the generality of the ḥadith. Allāh knows best.

TOPIC TWO: THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF THE FORESTS IN LIGHT OF THE STATUTORY PROVISIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pays great attention to forests, and for this reason it has enacted laws for everything that would develop and protect the forests, and among the laws that were enacted for this goal is the Pastures and Forests Law issued by Royal Decree No. M/55 dated 10/29/1425 AH, as well as the Strategy and National Forestry Plan in Saudi Arabia, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, and approved by the Honorable Council of Ministers for the period 1426-1446 AH (2005 – 2025) by virtue of Resolution No. 306 dated 12/23/1426 AH, then came the Environment Law, issued on 11/19/1441 AH corresponding to: 07/10/ 2020, for the inclusion of the entire components of the environment.

The statutory provisions of the Saudi regulator took into account the development and protection of forests on the one hand, and on the other hand, the imposition of severe penalties on those who violate or encroach on forests by causing damage in any way.

Among what was stipulated in the provisions of the Environment Law is what was stated in Article Twelve: “It is not permissible to own the lands of forests, pastures, and national, wild and geological parks, in any manner of disposal that transfers ownership.” The article also stipulated in the second paragraph that: “It is not permissible to encroach - whether it is by expansion or creation - on forest lands, grasslands, national, wild, and geological parks”.

What is stipulated in the article is explicit about the attention of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards the development and protection of forests, by preserving forest lands from private ownership or encroachment in any capacity whatsoever.

The Saudi regulator did not make the reclamation of forest lands as communal, but confined it to some restrictions, including: What was stipulated in Article Fifteen of the Environment Law: “For the reclamation and levelling of agricultural lands and vegetation lands, a license must be obtained in accordance with what the regulations specify”, as well as what was stipulated in the Article Sixteen: "It is prohibited to engage in any activity or work within the lands of the vegetation without obtaining a permit or license, according to the regulations."

In order to protect the forests, the text of the Saudi regulator in the Environment Law came explicitly to forbid damaging the forests or the green vegetation, or engaging in any act that could be detrimental to the forests in any way, whether through cutting, grazing, or undermining their appearance by leaving waste in them, and so on, as mentioned in the text of the article: “Anything that may harm the be detrimental to the vegetation or undermine the natural balance therein is prohibited, especially the following:

- Cutting down trees, shrubs, herbs, or plants, or uprooting, transporting, or stripping them of their bark, leaves, or any part thereof, or moving, bulldozing, or trading in their soil.

- Leaving waste inside them, burying it, burning it, or throwing it in places other than those designated for it that as determined by the competent authority.
- Igniting fire inside them in places other than those designated for that purpose by the competent authority.
- Destroying their fixed or movable facilities, cutting or destroying the fences placed by the competent authority inside them, or tampering with their border or indicative signs.
- Grazing in sites and periods prohibited by the competent authority.
- Releasing into the forest any kind of animal that is alien to the environment or invasive.

Also, the text in the Environment Law stated that: “It is prohibited to produce local firewood or charcoal, or to transport, store, sell, or promote any of them without obtaining a permit or license, as determined by the regulations.”

The statutory texts related to forests were not meant to be kept in the files, but rather all these provisions were converted to applied procedures that were captured in the Vision 2030, with field procedures being taken, for example:

- The Ministry of Agriculture prepared executive rules on the Environment Law to protect forests from logging violations, and Vision 2030 captured several projects and initiatives in that regard, like: Green Saudi Arabia, Green Middle East and other forms of showing keen interest in the forests.
- Council of Ministers Decision No. (417) was issued on 07/19/1440 AH to establish the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification, to supervise the management and investment of rangelands, forests and national parks, to preserve plant genetic resources and vegetation outside the protected areas in the Kingdom in all its environments, and to combat desertification, This Center also, falls within the implementation of Vision (2030) regarding forests and vegetation cover in general, and the Center has carried out several activities, including:
 - Launching of patrols to protect and monitor forests and parks in the Aseer region, with more than 100 patrols covering five locations in the region, in addition to the use of five drones, in order to monitor and detect encroachments and violations on the vegetation cover, and arrest the perpetrators, and to take appropriate measures in accordance with the executive regulations of the Environment Law.
 - The Center also launched a project for works on the initiative to develop the capacity to prepare for drought and mitigate its severity in the Kingdom, which falls within the initiatives of the National Transformation Program to achieve Vision 2030, within the framework of the Kingdom's interest and efforts to reduce the effects of desertification and drought through the expansion of afforestation projects and the rehabilitation of degraded vegetation sites, in order to achieve the objectives of the Saudi Green Initiative.

- Participating in the International Day of Forests on March 21st.

CONCLUSION:

The necessity of developing and protecting forests was shown in the foregoing paper, from the perspective of the generalities and concepts of Sharī'ah texts, likewise the importance of the Green Cover in general or the forests in particular, and the care of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's laws in developing and protecting the forests.

It was established that the laws in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are an extension of its constitution based on the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, which are deemed suitable for all times and places.

It was also established that the Saudi regulator has transformed the statutory texts into applied procedures for implementation, as seen in the inclusion of those statutory procedures for the development of the environment in general and forests in particular in the country's Vision (2030). Vision (2030) capturing several projects, including: the Saudi Green Initiative and the Green Middle East.

Saudi Arabia has also established Centers to supervise the management and investment in rangelands, forests and national parks, to preserve plant genetic resources and vegetation outside the protected areas in the Kingdom in all its environments, and to combat desertification.

Saudi Arabia has launched patrols to protect and monitor forests and parks in the various regions of the Kingdom.

The National Center For Vegetation Cover Development And Combating Desertification caters for the development of vegetation and combating desertification, as seen in the initiative to develop the capacity to prepare for drought and mitigate its severity in Saudi Arabia, as part of the initiatives of the National Transformation Program to achieve Vision 2030.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are thankful to the Deanship of Scientific Research at Najran University for funding this work, under the Twelfth Research Stage, grant code: NU/DRP/SEHRC/12/1

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