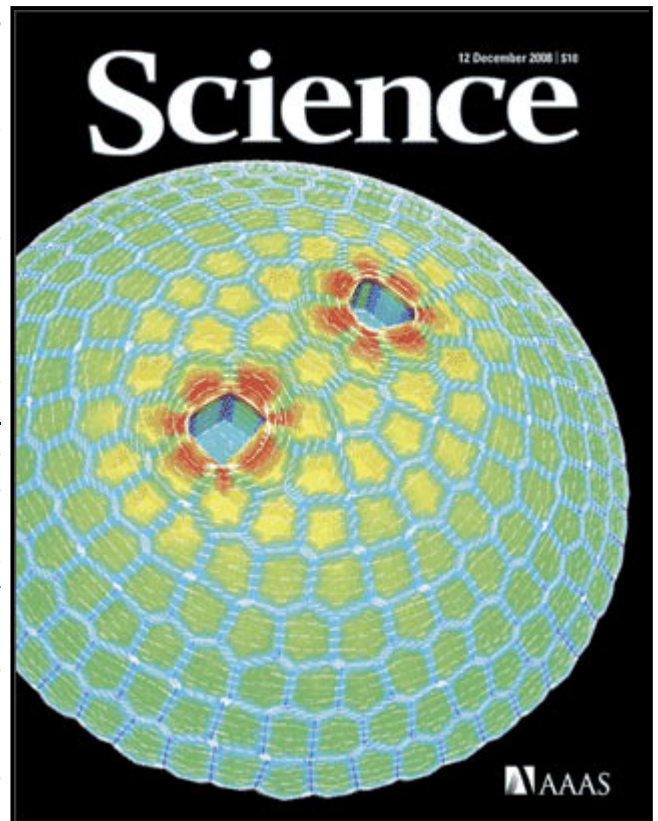


# HARUN YAHYA ADALAH SUARA TERLANTANG DALAM DEBAT TENTANG EVOLUSI DI DUNIA ISLAM - 12.12.2008 AMERIKA SERIKAT/SCIENCE

Dalam terbitannya tertanggal 12 Desember 2008, majalah terkenal *Science* memuat tulisan berjudul "Bracing for Islamic Creationism." (Bersiaga Menghadapi Penciptaan Islam) Tulisan tersebut menekankan tingginya tingkat penolakan terhadap teori evolusi di dunia Islam. Tulisan itu lalu mengarahkan pembacanya pada karya-karya Harun Yahya terkait dengan perkembangan ini di dunia Muslim:

Di awal 2007, pakar biologi dan antropologi di universitas-universitas di seantero Amerika Serikat menerima hadiah yang tidak diminta berupa [Atlas Penciptaan](#) berwarna, berhalaman 850 lembar, karya tokoh penciptaan Muslim, Adnan Oktar, yang bernama pena Harun Yahya (*Science*, 16 Februari 2007, hal. 925). Atlas tersebut menjadi perhatian di saat yang tepat sehingga, meskipun beberapa puluh tahun terakhir menyaksikan sengketa mengenai masalah pengajaran evolusi di Amerika Serikat, perang utama setelahnya sangat mungkin terjadi di dunia Muslim (yakni negara-negara yang mayoritas penduduknya Muslim, maupun di negara-negara di mana terdapat sejumlah besar warga Muslim). ... Selain itu, **sudah ada pergerakan penciptaan Islam yang semakin berkembang dan sangat berpengaruh.** ... Organisasinya [Adnan Oktar], yang berpusat di Turki, telah menghasilkan film-film dokumenter, ratusan brosur, dan buku-buku anti-evolusi dan membuatnya tersedia untuk diunduh gratis dari situsnya ([www.harunyahya.com](http://www.harunyahya.com)). ... **Saat ini, Harun Yahya adalah suara terlantang dalam debat mengenai evolusi di dunia Islam ...**



## Bracing for Islamic Creationism

Salman Hamud

Early in 2007, biologists and anthropologists at universities across the United States received an annotated gift of an 850-page, colored *Atlas of Creation*, produced by a Muslim creationist, Adnan Oktar, who goes by the pen name of Harun Yahya (Science, 14 February 2007, p. 927). The atlas was a timely notice that, although the last couple of decades have seen an increasing concentration on the teaching of evolution in the United States, the next major battle over evolution is likely to take place in the Muslim world (i.e., predominantly Islamic countries), as well as in countries where there are large Muslim populations. Relatively poor education standards, in combination with frequent misstatements about evolutionary ideas, make the Muslim world a fertile ground for rejection of the theory. In addition, there already exists a growing and highly influential Islamic creationist movement (1).

Biological evolution is still a relatively new concept for a majority of Muslims, and a serious deficit over its religious compatibility has not yet taken place. It is likely that public opinion on this issue will be shaped in the next decade or so because of rising education levels in the Muslim world and the increasing importance of biological sciences.

**Views of Evolution from Scholars**  
Just as there is no monolithic Islam, there is no "official" opinion on evolution. There are varied views in the Quran that talk about the creation of the universe and of the living beings on Earth, but specific details are either left out. For example, the Quranic narrative of creation includes a 7-day account of creation. The length of each day, however, is not clearly specified. One day has been defined as "a thousand years of what you count" (22:17) or as "a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years" (70:4). The resulting ambiguity leaves open the possibility of a very old Earth. Indeed, young Earth creationism is widely absent in the Muslim world, and a serious deficit of years still exists.

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commonly accepted. On biological evolution, Islamic scholars and popular writers hold a wide range of opinions that represent a broad spectrum of other and political. From secular Turkey to the conservative majority of Saudi Arabia and the Muslim diaspora in Europe and in the United States. Opposition to evolution is often not centered on any particular verse from the Quran, but rather on the social and cultural fear that the theory poses for Muslims. Adnan Oktar becomes the "banned" heavily from the Islamic Creation Research and, more recently, from the Intelligent Design movement in the United States (2). His organization, based in Turkey, has produced anti-evolution documentaries, hundreds of pamphlets, and books and has made them available for download from its Web site ([www.harunyahya.com](http://www.harunyahya.com)). Because the idea of an ancient Earth is not consistent among Muslims,

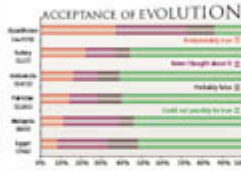
his is considerable potential biological creationism in a universe billions of years old. Indeed, the focus of his opposition is on the social and cultural threat posed by evolution in the broadest sense of the word.

Some prominent Islamic scholars teaching evolution in mosques also reject evolution. For example, Seyyed Hossein Nasir, a professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University, does not consider evolutionary theory to be more than an ideology (3). "The theory of evolution is the peg of the head of modernism. If it were to fall down, the whole tent would fall on top of the head of modernism. And therefore it is kept as an ideology and not as a scientific theory which has been proven" (4). A similar view is found in the works of Muhammad al-Ghazali, a theologian by training, who is the editor of the Canadian journal *Islam & Science: Journal of Islamic Perspectives on Science*. In a recent editorial, he wrote that

the logical implication of evolution is "nothing but the destruction of the sanctity of species." Rejecting evolution, he concludes, "Not only does each species preserve its characteristics, but it also maintains Divine command... and vice versa; if only, the Quran tells us. The rest and the last has been and will always remain so" (5).

There are many others, however, who accept various interpretations of evolution. The legal implication of evolution is "nothing but the destruction of the sanctity of species." Rejecting evolution, he concludes, "Not only does each species preserve its characteristics, but it also maintains Divine command... and vice versa; if only, the Quran tells us. The rest and the last has been and will always remain so" (5).

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Acceptance of evolution in nine Muslim countries. The data were gathered from 1996 and 2001, a part of a larger religious-political-Muslim survey. 100. The number of participants for each country is given in parentheses.

Often, this acceptance is justified in the context of the Quran or by crediting the theory to modern Muslim philosophers. For example, the South Asian philosopher and poet, Muhammad Iqbal, while accepting evolution voluntarily, credited "his century philosopher, Al-Jahiz for the idea of evolution and Ibn-Madwail, in the 11th century, as the "first Muslim thinker to give a clear and in many respects a remarkably modern theory of the origin of man" (6). Indeed, a few modern Muslim philosophers endorsed on the theories of common descent known at the time, but were pointed out as persons similar to natural selection.

Human evolution, however, is usually excluded from this schema. Some, though, have come up with creative ways to reconcile Islam with evidence for early hominid species. For example, Mustafa Husaini, director in the Islamic world for the book,

claiming that many of the modern scientific discoveries were already mentioned in the Quran, accepts actual evolution up to early hominid species and then posits a separate hominid evolution leading to modern humans (7). These evolutionary ideas are a far cry from the theory of evolution as accepted by biologists all over the world.

There are also many Muslim scientists, biologists and medical doctors that accept the teaching of evolution, including human evolution (8). In general, however, biologists in numbers, this advanced class represents an influential minority for the policy decision.

**Opinions of the General Population**

We do not know much about general views about science in Muslim countries, let alone on the specific question of evolution. A recent survey of public acceptance of evolution in 14 countries did include one Muslim country, Turkey (9). The study found that about 23% of adults in Turkey agree with the statement, "Human beings, as we know them, developed from other species of animals," well below the United States (44%). The result is all the more worrisome, because Turkey is one of the most educated and secular of Muslim countries.

A recent sociological study analyzing religious patterns in Muslim countries (Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, Turkey, and Kazakhstan) included a question about evolution as an example of an idea that challenges a "fundamental religious belief widely held by Muslims" (8). The respondents were asked, "Do you agree or disagree with Darwin's theory of evolution?" Only 30% of Indonesians, 54% of Pakistanis, 4% of Egyptians, 17% of Malaysians, and 22% of Turks agree that Darwin's theory is probably or most certainly true (see chart, page 1637). The former four countries of Kazakhstan, already showing differences in religious patterns with other countries in the study, had the highest fraction that accepted evolutionary theory. In fact, only 20% of Kazakhs thought that evolution is false, a fraction much lower than that of the U.S., which population (40%) (10).

These results point a depressing picture. However, the question regarding evolution relies heavily on the definition of evolution as understood by individual respondents. This is especially a problem when many participants, in the Muslim world, profess evolution with alacrity and consider it inherently against religion.

**Teaching of Evolution**  
Although the survey results may point to a dire situation, the reality on the ground is more complicated. Evolutionary biology is included in the high-school curricula of many Muslim countries. In fact, six of the 14 Muslim countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia, and Egypt, recently signed a statement by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) a global network of science academies, in support of the teaching of evolution, including human evolution (9). In general, however, biology (as is true for all other subjects) is often taught in a highly religious environment. For example, in Pakistan, where there is no separation of state and religion, the goal of the national biology curriculum for grades 10 to 12 is to "enable the students to appreciate that Allah... is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe" (11), and the textbooks include the relevant Quranic verses on the origin and creation of life. Biology textbooks in Pakistan contain a chapter on evolution, and evolutionary theory is presented as a fact of science. Nevertheless, the syllabus for the evolution chapter in the 12th-grade biology textbook is the Quranic verse, "And He is Who had produced you from a single being" (90:19). Apart from the syllabus, there are no religious references about creation or evolution in the remaining chapters or in suggested questions at the end (12). Although evolutionary theory is presented as a fact, the IUPAC statement notwithstanding, human evolution is missing from these textbooks. The follow-up chapters on evolution, instead emphasize the practical aspects of biology such as health, environment, and biotechnology.

Angela and Albert recently interviewed 18 science schoolteachers in Pakistan schools located in Karachi and Lahore and found that all favored using religious explanations about the creation of life, but most presented both scientific and religious perspectives while teaching biological evolution (13). Most (14 out of 18) accepted, at least held as possible, the evolution of organisms, but at the same time, 15 out of 18 rejected human evolution. All agreed that there is no contradiction between Islam and science.

These contradictory attitudes were also reflected in recent study of 27 Muslim university students from Turkey and Malaysia studying in various disciplines in Holland (12). Although most accepted macroevolution, almost all rejected microevolution and connected the idea to religious aspirations and to the impossibility of chance and luck.

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Some leading to complex species. However, some express an aversion towards or dislike any significant tension between Islam and science (12).

**Communicating Evolution**

The message about evolution in the Islamic world needs to be framed in a way that emphasizes practical applications and show that it is in the best of modern biology. It is not a matter of whether or not the Quranic text is true for all other subjects) is often taught in a highly religious environment. For example, in Pakistan, where there is no separation of state and religion, the goal of the national biology curriculum for grades 10 to 12 is to "enable the students to appreciate that Allah... is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe" (11), and the textbooks include the relevant Quranic verses on the origin and creation of life. Biology textbooks in Pakistan contain a chapter on evolution, and evolutionary theory is presented as a fact of science. Nevertheless, the syllabus for the evolution chapter in the 12th-grade biology textbook is the Quranic verse, "And He is Who had produced you from a single being" (90:19). Apart from the syllabus, there are no religious references about creation or evolution in the remaining chapters or in suggested questions at the end (12). Although evolutionary theory is presented as a fact, the IUPAC statement notwithstanding, human evolution is missing from these textbooks. The follow-up chapters on evolution, instead emphasize the practical aspects of biology such as health, environment, and biotechnology.

A general respect for science affords education a high priority in the Islamic world. Research scientists, especially biologists, should take advantage of this situation, should take the initiative with Muslim Creationists.

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