

Am I not your *tuakoi* (neighbour)?

Maina Talia

The islands of Tuvalu are among the lowest-lying islands in the world. They are highly vulnerable to rising sea levels associated with the climate emergency the planet now faces. It is possible that the inhabitants of these islands will need to become ‘climate refugees’ (though there is no such legal category). The future of the islands is being played out in the geopolitics of the world (the Anthropocene). It is into this context that I pose the question, ‘*Am I not your (tu)akoi?*’/ ‘*Am I not your neighbour?*’. The idea of the neighbour is deeply familiar to indigenous knowledge, to the Christian tradition and the ethics of climate justice. The language of neighbour is seldom used in COP statements (like the Paris agreement); it is seldom used even at the United Nations (UN) General Assemblies. It has never been the central focus of climate change negotiations.

I wish to present the case for the neighbour in the context of climate change. I am aware of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change. I am aware of how some Muslim countries like Bangladesh are very vulnerable to rising sea levels. I am aware of how much of the world’s oil is produced in Muslim states. I wish to hear Islamic responses to my use of the neighbour on the basis of how the Christian-Muslim understanding of this idea may serve well the global discussions on climate change.

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Respondent ***Associate Professor Mehmet Ozalp*** is a theologian, author and academic and the founding director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation (CISAC) at CSU. He is an executive member of Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT), a research centre at CSU.