

Maṣlaḥah-Based Legitimacy of Expanding *Fī Sabīlillāh* in Zakat: Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's Ijtihād in the Digital Age

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Abstract: This article examines the *ijtihād* of Yusuf al-Qaradhawi in expanding the meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* as a category of zakat recipients through the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, particularly the concept of *maṣlaḥah*. While previous studies have explored the methodological aspects of al-Qaradhawi's expansion of *jihād* from military to intellectual, educational, social, economic, and political domains, its normative legitimacy in relation to the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) in the digital age remains underexplored. Employing qualitative library research with content analysis, this study finds that: (1) al-Qaradhawi's *ijtihād* is firmly grounded in *maṣlaḥah*, particularly the notion of urgent necessity (*al-maṣlaḥah al-mulḥiḥah*) in responding to intellectual and cultural warfare (*al-ghaẓw al-fikrī wa al-tsaqāfī*); (2) the six categories of activities he legitimizes—*da'wah* institutions, Islamic research centers, Islamic media, publications, cadre training, and support for persecuted preachers—directly contribute to *ḥifẓ al-dīn*; and (3) these activities, originally situated within *maṣlaḥah ḥājīyyah*, have evolved into *ḍarūrīyyah* in the context of digital disruption. This study contributes to contemporary *ijtihād* discourse by demonstrating that contextual expansion of textual meanings can be normatively justified when aligned with higher objectives of the Sharī'ah, particularly under conditions of epistemic contestation in digital environments.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji ijtihad Yusuf al-Qaradhawi tentang perluasan makna *fī sabīlillāh* sebagai mustahik zakat melalui perspektif *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, khususnya konsep *maṣlaḥah*. Meskipun perluasan jihad oleh al-Qaradhawi dari ranah militer ke ranah pemikiran, pendidikan, sosial, ekonomi, dan politik telah dikaji secara metodologis, keselarasannya dengan pemeliharaan agama (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) di era digital masih kurang dieksplorasi. Menggunakan penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dengan analisis isi, studi ini menemukan bahwa: (1) ijtihad al-Qaradhawi secara kuat dilandasi oleh pertimbangan *maṣlaḥah*, khususnya kebutuhan mendesak (*al-maṣlaḥah al-mulḥiḥah*) untuk melawan perang pemikiran dan kebudayaan (*al-ghaẓw al-fikrī wa al-tsaqāfī*) terhadap Islam; (2) enam jenis kegiatan yang dilegitimasi oleh perluasan al-Qaradhawi—pusat dakwah, pusat studi Islam, media Islam, publikasi Islam, pelatihan kader dakwah, dan dukungan bagi dai yang teraniaya—semuanya berkontribusi langsung pada *ḥifẓ al-dīn*; dan (3) perluasan ini diklasifikasikan sebagai *maṣlaḥah ḥājīyyah* (kebutuhan sekunder) yang telah berkembang menjadi *ḍarūrīyyah* (kebutuhan esensial) dalam konteks digital. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada metodologi ijtihad kontemporer dengan menunjukkan bahwa perluasan kontekstual makna tekstual dapat dibenarkan ketika melayani tujuan-tujuan tertinggi syariat.

Keywords: Digital Age; *Fī Sabīlillāh*; *Maṣlaḥah*

Introduction

The third pillar of Islam, zakat, occupies a central and enduring position within the normative and socio-economic structure of Islamic law. Beyond its ritual dimension, zakat functions as a redistributive mechanism aimed at achieving social justice and collective welfare. The Qur'an explicitly designates eight categories (*aṣnāf al-mustaḥiqqīn*) eligible to receive zakat, as articulated in Q.S. al-Tawbah [9]: 60. Among these categories, *fi sabilillāh* has historically been the most contested and dynamically interpreted, reflecting broader tensions between textual fidelity and contextual adaptation in Islamic legal thought (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973; Habibullah, 2017; Sarbini, 2018).

Classical jurists largely converged on a relatively restrictive understanding of *fi sabilillāh*, confining it to military engagement (*jihād qitālī*) in defense of the Muslim community. This interpretation is grounded in the dominant socio-political realities of the formative Islamic period, where physical confrontation constituted the primary mode of existential threat. However, even within the classical tradition, nuances existed regarding the scope and application of this category, indicating that the debate has never been entirely monolithic. The emergence of modernity, nation-states, and globalized communication systems has further intensified this debate, prompting contemporary scholars to revisit and reassess the meaning of *fi sabilillāh* in light of new realities (Waluya, 2017; Saeed, 2021).

Among contemporary scholars, divergent approaches have emerged. Rashid Riḍā adopts an expansive interpretation, extending *fi sabilillāh* to encompass a wide range of public interests, including the construction of mosques, schools, and hospitals. This approach is rooted in a broad conception of communal benefit (*maṣlahah 'āmmah*), where any activity that strengthens the Muslim community may be subsumed under *fi sabilillāh* (Riḍā, 1990). In contrast, scholars such as Wahbah al-Zuhaylī maintain a more conservative stance, adhering closely to the classical restriction while allowing limited contextual exceptions. Between these two poles stands Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, whose approach represents a nuanced middle path: he rejects an unrestricted expansion to all public interests, yet simultaneously reinterprets *jihād* beyond its purely military connotation to include intellectual, educational, social, economic, and political dimensions (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973).

Al-Qaradhawi's *ijtihād* is particularly significant because it preserves the textual specificity of *fi sabilillāh* while expanding its functional scope through analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) and purposive interpretation. He argues that the underlying legal cause (*'illah*) of *jihād* is the support and defense of Islam (*nuṣrat al-Islām*). Consequently, any activity that fulfills this objective may legitimately fall within the ambit of *fi sabilillāh*, even if it does not involve physical combat. This reinterpretation marks a critical shift from form to function, from literalism to purposive reasoning, and from static categorization to dynamic application.

Despite the methodological sophistication of al-Qaradhawi's approach, existing scholarship has largely focused on its juristic and exegetical dimensions, often neglecting its evaluation within the broader framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. In particular, there remains a significant gap in analyzing whether this expansion can be normatively justified through the concept of *maṣlahah*, especially in relation to the preservation of religion (*hiḍḍ al-dīn*) under contemporary conditions. This gap is especially pronounced in the context of the digital age, where the nature of threats to religion has undergone a profound transformation.

Recent scholarship has documented the emergence of a digitally mediated religious landscape characterized by the decentralization of authority, the proliferation of unverified knowledge, and the algorithmic amplification of sensational or polarizing content (Bunt, 2018; Hasan, 2019; Campbell, 2021). In such an environment, traditional religious institutions no longer hold a monopoly over the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Instead, authority is increasingly contested by a wide range of actors, including social media influencers, anonymous content creators, and algorithm-driven platforms. This shift has significant implications for how Islam is understood, practiced, and represented in the public sphere.

Moreover, digital platforms have facilitated the rapid spread of Islamophobic narratives, misinformation, and distorted representations of Islamic teachings. Studies indicate that such content often achieves higher visibility and engagement due to the logic of platform algorithms, which prioritize emotionally charged and controversial material (Ali, 2021; Awan & Zempi, 2015; Hassan, 2022). As a result, Muslims—particularly younger generations—are exposed to a fragmented and often misleading body of religious knowledge, raising serious concerns about the integrity of *ḥifẓ al-dīn* in contemporary contexts.

At the same time, the relationship between digital platforms and religious life is not uniformly adversarial. A growing body of scholarship documents how the same platforms that circulate Islamophobic content also enable constructive *da'wah*, expand access to religious knowledge, and give marginalized voices a public presence. Ulyan (2023) shows that social media allows preachers to communicate in visually engaging and emotionally resonant ways, increasing interaction between preachers and audiences and widening participation in religious discourse. Similarly, Meerangani et al. (2025) find that digital *da'wah* platforms help preachers reach religiously underserved and geographically dispersed audiences, including new Muslims, more effectively than conventional outreach. Hannan and Mursyidi (2023) likewise note that social media has diversified, rather than simply eroded, religious authority in contemporary Indonesia. This more balanced picture does not negate the threats discussed above; rather, it clarifies that the *maṣlaḥah* of Islamic media, *da'wah* centers, and related activities lies specifically in enabling Muslims to compete effectively within this contested digital space, not merely in defending against a monolithic external threat.

In addition to external challenges, the digital age has also intensified internal epistemic crises within Muslim communities. The ease of access to religious texts, coupled with the absence of methodological rigor, has led to the proliferation of unqualified interpretations and the erosion of traditional scholarly authority. This phenomenon, often described as the “democratization of religious knowledge,” creates both opportunities and risks. While it allows for broader participation in religious discourse, it also undermines established mechanisms of validation and authenticity (Bunt, 2018; Hasan, 2019).

Within this transformed landscape, the classical understanding of *jihād* as primarily physical struggle appears increasingly insufficient to address the multifaceted challenges facing Islam. The battleground has shifted from physical territories to digital and epistemic spaces, where ideas, narratives, and representations play a decisive role. Consequently, preserving religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) now requires not only safeguarding belief and ritual practice but also actively engaging in the production, dissemination, and defense of Islamic knowledge in digital environments.

It is within this context that al-Qaradhawī's expansion of *fi sabilillāh* gains renewed relevance. His inclusion of activities such as *da'wah* institutions, Islamic research centers, media platforms, publications, cadre training, and support for persecuted preachers can be reinterpreted as strategic responses to contemporary forms of *al-ghazw al-fikrī* (intellectual invasion) and *al-ghazw al-tsaqāfī* (cultural invasion). These activities are not merely auxiliary or complementary; rather, they constitute essential mechanisms for safeguarding the epistemic and representational dimensions of Islam.

From the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, the critical question is whether these activities can be classified as serving *maṣlaḥah*, and if so, at what level of necessity. Classical theorists such as al-Shāṭibī categorize *maṣlaḥah* into three hierarchical levels: *darūriyyah* (essential), *ḥājjiyyah* (complementary), and *taḥsīniyyah* (embellishment). While many *da'wah*-related activities have traditionally been considered *ḥājjiyyah*, the changing nature of threats in the digital age suggests a possible reconfiguration of this hierarchy.

This study argues that the digital transformation of religious life has elevated certain *ḥājjiyyah*-level activities into the domain of *darūriyyah*, particularly those directly related to the preservation of religious knowledge and identity. In an environment where misinformation spreads rapidly and authoritative knowledge is contested, the absence of credible Islamic media, research institutions, and trained scholars may lead to a gradual erosion of faith and understanding. Under such conditions, these activities are no longer optional enhancements but essential safeguards of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*.

Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on juristic debates or exegetical interpretations, this research adopts a *maqāṣid*-oriented analytical framework to evaluate the normative legitimacy of al-Qaradhawi's expansion. It seeks to bridge the gap between *ijtihād* methodology and *maqāṣid* theory by examining how contextual changes can justify the reclassification of legal categories based on evolving *maṣlahah*. In doing so, the study contributes to a more dynamic and responsive understanding of Islamic law, one that remains faithful to its foundational principles while adapting to contemporary realities.

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research question: how can the concept of *maṣlahah* within *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* be used to legitimate al-Qaradhawi's expansion of *fi ṣabīlillāh*, particularly in relation to the preservation of religion (*hiḍḍ al-dīn*) in the digital age? More specifically, it examines whether the six categories of activities identified by al-Qaradhawi can be normatively justified as serving essential or complementary needs within the hierarchy of *maṣlahah*.

The significance of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it provides a novel framework for evaluating contemporary *ijtihād* by integrating *maqāṣid*-based analysis with contextual considerations of digital transformation. Practically, it offers guidance for zakat institutions in allocating funds under the category of *fi ṣabīlillāh*, particularly in prioritizing activities that directly contribute to the preservation of religion in an increasingly complex and contested digital environment.

Literature Review

More recent studies have kept pace with zakat institutions' evolving practice: Aqbar et al. (2022) examine how a national amil zakat institution operationalizes the criteria for *fi ṣabīlillāh* in its distribution policy, while Ramadhani and Hamzah (2024) revisit the interpretation of *fi ṣabīlillāh* as a zakat-recipient category in light of contemporary distribution practice. These studies, however, remain largely descriptive or institutionally oriented; they do not evaluate al-Qaradhawi's specific expansion against the hierarchical *maṣlahah* framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, nor do they examine its normative legitimacy under the conditions of digital disruption. Thus, a significant research gap remains: no study has specifically analyzed whether al-Qaradhawi's expansion of *fi ṣabīlillāh* is legitimated by *maṣlahah* considerations, particularly in the context of preserving religion (*hiḍḍ al-dīn*) in the digital age.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research design to examine the *ijtihād* of Yusuf al-Qaradhawi regarding the expansion of *fi ṣabīlillāh* within the framework of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, with particular emphasis on the concept of *maṣlahah*. Given that the object of analysis is normative reasoning embedded in classical and contemporary Islamic legal texts, a qualitative approach is considered most appropriate to capture the depth, structure, and implications of juristic arguments.

Research Design and Approach

This research adopts a normative-analytical design combined with a contextual-interpretive approach. The normative dimension focuses on reconstructing al-Qaradhawi's legal reasoning as articulated in his primary works, while the analytical dimension evaluates this reasoning through the theoretical lens of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*.

Importantly, this study goes beyond descriptive exposition by incorporating a contextual re-reading of classical legal categories in light of contemporary socio-digital transformations. In this sense, the research is positioned within a *maqāṣid*-based evaluative framework, where legal interpretations are assessed not only by their textual grounding but also by their capacity to realize higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) under changing conditions.

This methodological positioning allows the study to bridge a critical gap between *ijtihād* as a juristic process and *maqāṣid* as a normative evaluative tool. Rather than treating *maqāṣid* as a supplementary framework, this study operationalizes it as the primary معيار (*mi'yār*, evaluative criterion) for assessing the legitimacy of legal expansion.

Data Sources

The primary data source is Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's *Fiqh al-Zakāh: Aḥkāmuhā wa Falsafatuhā fi Ḍaw' al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah* (1973), particularly Volume 2, which provides a detailed discussion of *fi sabilillāh* as a zakat category. This text is selected due to its authoritative status in contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and its explicit articulation of the expansion under investigation.

Secondary sources are divided into two categories:

First, classical theoretical sources that establish the conceptual foundation of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* and *maṣlaḥah*, including al-Shāṭibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt*, al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfā*, and al-Shawkānī's *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*. These works provide the normative structure for evaluating legal reasoning.

Second, contemporary scholarly literature, particularly peer-reviewed journal articles, addressing digital religion, transformation of Islamic authority, Islamophobia, and *da'wah* in online environments (Bunt, 2018; Hasan, 2019; Ali, 2021; Rahman, 2023; Campbell, 2021). These sources are essential for situating al-Qaradhawi's arguments within current socio-technological realities and for justifying the contextual relevance of the study.

The inclusion of recent international and national journal publications ensures that the analysis is not only textually grounded but also empirically informed by contemporary scholarly discourse.

Data Collection

Data collection is conducted through a systematic documentation method involving identification, selection, extraction, and classification of relevant textual materials. The process follows three criteria:

1. Relevance: Texts must directly address *fi sabilillāh*, *ijtihād*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, or *maṣlaḥah*
2. Authority: Priority is given to recognized classical works and peer-reviewed journal publications
3. Contextual significance: Sources that address digital transformation and contemporary challenges are prioritized
4. From the primary source, all passages related to the definition, justification, and application of *fi sabilillāh* are extracted. Particular attention is given to al-Qaradhawi's identification of six categories of activities included within this term.

Data Analysis

This study utilizes qualitative content analysis as developed by Krippendorff (2018), complemented by a *maqāṣid*-based evaluative model. The analytical process is conducted in four interconnected stages:

1. Textual Reconstruction

At this stage, al-Qaradhawi's arguments are systematically reconstructed to identify the structure of his *ijtihād*, including the use of *bayānī* (linguistic) and *ta'līlī* (causal-analogical) reasoning. This step ensures that the original intent and internal coherence of his argument are preserved.

2. Thematic Categorization

The extracted data are then organized into thematic categories based on the six activities identified by al-Qaradhawi: *da'wah* institutions, Islamic study centers, media, publications, cadre training, and support for persecuted preachers. These categories function as analytical units.

3. Maqāṣid-Based Evaluation

Each category is evaluated in relation to its contribution to *ḥifẓ al-dīn*. This evaluation is conducted using al-Shāṭibī's hierarchical classification of *maṣlaḥah*:

- darūriyyah* (essential)
- ḥājiyyah* (complementary)
- taḥsīniyyah* (embellishment)

This stage represents the core analytical contribution of the study, as it transforms descriptive categories into normative assessments.

4. Contextual Reclassification

In the final stage, the study examines whether contemporary digital conditions necessitate a reclassification of these activities within the hierarchy of *maṣlaḥah*. This involves integrating insights from digital religion studies to assess how shifts in epistemic authority, media structures, and information dissemination affect the preservation of religion.

This step introduces a dynamic dimension to *maqāṣid* analysis, demonstrating that the classification of *maṣlaḥah* is not static but responsive to contextual transformations.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is grounded in *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, with particular focus on *ḥifẓ al-dīn* as one of the five essential objectives (*al-darūriyyāt al-khams*). This study adopts al-Shāṭibī's tripartite classification of *maṣlaḥah* and extends it through contextual analysis.

Crucially, this research introduces a dynamic hierarchy model of *maṣlaḥah*, arguing that the classification of needs may shift across contexts. Activities traditionally categorized as *ḥājīyyah* may, under conditions of heightened epistemic threat, become *darūriyyah*. This model serves as the primary analytical lens for evaluating al-Qaradhawi's expansion.

Operationally, this study reclassifies an activity from *ḥājīyyah* to *darūriyyah* only when four cumulative conditions are met: (1) severity – credible evidence indicates that the threat to religious belief or understanding is widespread rather than isolated; (2) absence of functional alternatives – no comparably effective, readily available means exists to counter the threat other than the activity in question; (3) proximate harm to *ḥifẓ al-dīn* – the foreseeable consequence of inaction is a material erosion of correct religious understanding or practice, not merely inconvenience; and (4) urgency (*al-maṣlaḥah al-mulḥīḥah*) – the need is pressing in the present context rather than speculative. These criteria, adapted from al-Shāṭibī's own distinction between *darūriyyah* and *ḥājīyyah* (Al-Syathibi, n.d., Vol. 2, pp. 8-12) and from al-Raysuni's (1992) discussion of contextual necessity, are applied consistently to each of the six activities in the following section, rather than asserted impressionistically.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure rigor and credibility, the study employs several strategies:

1. Theoretical triangulation: integrating classical jurisprudence, *maqāṣid* theory, and contemporary digital studies
2. Conceptual consistency: maintaining strict adherence to established definitions of *maṣlaḥah* and *maqāṣid*
3. Analytical transparency: clearly outlining each stage of the analytical process
4. Interpretive coherence: ensuring that conclusions logically follow from textual evidence and theoretical framework

Rather than statistical generalization, the study aims for analytical generalization, where findings contribute to broader theoretical discussions on *ijtihād*, *maqāṣid*, and contemporary Islamic legal adaptation.

Methodological Contribution

This study contributes methodologically by demonstrating how *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* can be operationalized as an evaluative framework for contemporary *ijtihād*. It proposes a shift from static classification toward a context-sensitive model of *maṣlaḥah*, where legal categories are reassessed based on their functional role in achieving *maqāṣid* under changing socio-historical conditions. In doing so, the study offers a replicable approach for analyzing other contemporary legal issues in Islamic law, particularly those shaped by digital transformation and epistemic disruption.

Results and Discussion

Al-Qaradhawi's Ijtihad on *Fī Sabīlillāh*: A Brief Overview

Before analyzing the maslahah legitimacy of al-Qaradhawi's expansion, it is necessary to recall the core of his ijtihad. Based on a previous study (Article 1), al-Qaradhawi employs two ijtihad methods sequentially. First, the bayānī method (linguistic analysis) establishes that the meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* in QS. al-Taubah [9]: 60 is the specific meaning (jihad), not the general meaning (all public interests). He rejects the muwassī'ūn position because it contradicts the principle of restriction (al-ḥaṣr) in the verse and would cause useless repetition (al-takrār bi lā fā'idah) (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, pp. 656-657).

Second, the ta'līlī method (qiyās/analogical reasoning) expands the meaning of jihad from the military domain to non-military domains. Al-Qaradhawi analogizes physical jihad to jihad in thought, education, social action, economics, and politics, with the same 'illah (legal cause): "supporting Islam" (nuṣrat al-Islām) (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, pp. 658-660). He explicitly states:

"If the various forms of jihad we have mentioned were not included in the meaning of jihad by the text, they would certainly be obligated to be analogized (to physical jihad) through qiyās. For all of them are actions intended to support and defend Islam, resist its enemies, and establish Allah's word on earth" (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 658).

From this ijtihad, al-Qaradhawi provides six examples of activities that fall under the expanded meaning of *fī sabīlillāh* (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 668):

1. Establishing da'wah centers that invite to true Islam and convey the Islamic message to non-Muslims worldwide
2. Establishing Islamic study centers that guide Muslim youth and protect them from atheism, confused thought, and moral decline
3. Forming Islamic information media to counter misleading and anti-Islamic writings
4. Disseminating Islamic books explaining the essence and beauty of Islam
5. Preparing competent and trustworthy da'wah cadres to face the enemies of Islam
6. Providing support to Islamic preachers who face pressure from external and internal forces

The following sections analyze whether these six activities can be legitimated by maslahah considerations from the perspective of maqāshid al-syarī'ah, with particular attention to the preservation of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*) in the digital age.

The Concept of Maslahah in Maqāshid al-Syarī'ah

Maslahah literally means benefit, interest, or goodness. In Islamic legal theory, it is defined as "preserving the objectives of syariah by preventing harm from creation" (Al-Syaukani, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 184). Al-Ghazali (1993, p. 311) defines it as "attracting benefit and preventing harm," but emphasizes that the benefit and harm are determined by the Lawgiver (Allah), not by human desire.

Imam al-Syatibi (d. 790 H) systematized the theory of maqāshid al-syarī'ah in his magnum opus al-Muwāfaqāt. He argues that the ultimate purpose of syariah is to realize maslahah for humanity, both in this world and the hereafter (Al-Syathibi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 7). This maslahah is achieved through the preservation of five essential elements (al-dharuriyyat al-khams): religion (dīn), life (nafs), intellect ('aql), lineage (nasl), and property (māl) (Al-Syathibi, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 7; Kamali, 2020, p. 45).

These five elements are categorized into three levels of necessity (Al-Syathibi, n.d., Vol. 2, pp. 8-12; Al-Raysuni, 1992, pp. 45-52):

Table 1. *three levels of necessity*

Level	Definition	Consequence if Neglected
<i>Dharuriyyah</i> (Essential)	Basic needs for survival in this world and salvation in the hereafter	Chaos, destruction, loss of worldly and otherworldly well-being
<i>Hajiyyah</i> (Complementary)	Needs that remove hardship and facilitate life	Difficulty and hardship, but not total collapse
<i>Tahsiniyyah</i> (Embellishment)	Needs that improve quality of life and moral standards	Loss of perfection and beauty, but life continues

Sources:

Among these five, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (preservation of religion) occupies the highest position in the hierarchy (Al-Raysuni, 1992, p. 78). This is because all other *maslahah* are meaningless if religion is not upheld. A person whose life, intellect, property, and lineage are protected but who neglects religion has achieved nothing of value in the sight of Allah.

In the context of *fi sabīlillāh*, the critical question is: Can the expansion of this category be legitimated by *maslahah*? And if so, at which level of necessity?

Maslahah Legitimacy of Al-Qaradhawi's Expansion

Al-Qaradhawi himself provides the basis for *maslahah* legitimacy in his *ijtihād*. He explicitly states that his expansion is necessary because the context of supporting Allah's religion has changed (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 657). He notes that in the present age, warfare is no longer purely physical but takes the form of intellectual warfare (*al-ghazwu al-fikrī*) and cultural warfare (*al-ghazwu al-tsaqāfī*), whose dangers are greater than physical warfare.

This is a classic *maslahah* argument: when the circumstances (*waqī'*) change, the application of a legal ruling may need to adapt to achieve the same objective. The objective (*maqashid*) remains the same – preserving religion – but the means (*wasā'il*) must evolve to address new threats.

Threats to Islam in the digital age are numerous and well-documented. Bin Baz (1403 H, p. 117) describes *al-ghazwu al-fikrī* as a systematic effort by enemies of Islam to distort the image of Islam, spread misconceptions, and alienate Muslims from their religion. Al-Saqqa (n.d., pp. 36-37) adds that this intellectual warfare is often more dangerous than physical warfare because it attacks the very foundations of belief.

In the digital age, these threats have intensified. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become primary sources of information for many people, especially the youth. These platforms are used to spread Islamophobic content, distortions of Islamic teachings, and ideologies incompatible with Islam (Ali, 2021; Hassan, 2022; Rahman, 2023). Without counter-narratives presented through the same channels, Muslims – particularly the younger generation – are vulnerable to these influences.

Given this context, al-Qaradhawi's expansion can be justified as *maslahah* at the level of *hajiyyah* that has evolved into *dharuriyyah*. In normal circumstances, *da'wah* activities might be considered *hajiyyah* (complementary). But when enemy forces are actively spreading misinformation about Islam through sophisticated media and well-funded campaigns, *da'wah* becomes *dharuriyyah* (essential). If Muslims do not engage in intellectual and cultural *jihad*, they risk losing their religion – the highest of the five essential *maqashid*.

Six Types of Activities and Their Contribution to Ḥifẓ al-Dīn

This section analyzes each of the six activities al-Qaradhawi includes in his expansion, demonstrating how each contributes to *ḥifẓ al-dīn* and can be legitimated by *maslahah*.

1. Da'wah Centers (مراكز الدعوة)

Da'wah centers are institutions dedicated to conveying the message of Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims. In the digital age, da'wah centers must operate not only physically but also virtually through websites, social media, and online platforms (Hamid & Saari, 2021).

The contribution to *ḥifẓ al-dīn* is direct and obvious. Da'wah centers strengthen the faith of Muslims by providing correct religious knowledge and correct misconceptions. They introduce Islam to non-Muslims accurately, countering Islamophobic narratives that portray Islam as violent, intolerant, or backward (Esposito & Mogahed, 2008).

From a *maslahah* perspective, da'wah centers are *ḥajīyyah* that can become *dharuriyyah* in contexts where Muslims lack access to religious education or where anti-Islamic propaganda is widespread. In many parts of the world, including some Muslim-majority countries, young Muslims are increasingly disconnected from traditional religious institutions (Hamid, 2016). Da'wah centers that use modern methods and media to reach this demographic are essential.

2. Islamic Study Centers (مراكز الدراسات الإسلامية)

Islamic study centers differ from da'wah centers in their focus on intensive study and education. These centers conduct research, offer courses, and train scholars and preachers. They are the intellectual backbone of the Muslim community (Hasan, 2019).

The contribution to *ḥifẓ al-dīn* through Islamic study centers operates at a deeper level. While da'wah centers focus on outreach, study centers focus on the intellectual foundation of faith. They produce the knowledge that da'wah centers disseminate. They train the scholars and preachers who lead the community. They conduct research to address contemporary challenges from an Islamic perspective (Ahmed, 2018).

The *maslahah* of Islamic study centers is primarily *ḥajīyyah*—communities can survive without them, but only with great difficulty and at the cost of intellectual dependence on non-Muslim sources. However, in the digital age where information—both true and false—flows freely, the need for authoritative Islamic knowledge has become *dharuriyyah*. Without credible Islamic study centers producing well-researched responses to modern questions, Muslims may turn to unreliable online sources, some of which promote extremism or deviation (Bunt, 2018).

3. Islamic Information Media (وسائل الإعلام الإسلامية)

Islamic information media includes newspapers, magazines, websites, television channels, radio stations, and social media accounts dedicated to presenting Islam accurately and countering misinformation. In the digital age, this is arguably the most critical frontier of *jihad fī sabīlillāh* (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 668; bin Baz, 1403 H, p. 119).

The threat posed by anti-Islamic media is immense. Studies have documented systematic bias in Western media coverage of Islam and Muslims, often associating Islam with terrorism, violence against women, and oppression (Poole, 2010; Saeed, 2021). Social media amplifies this bias through algorithms that prioritize sensational content. Islamophobic hashtags, memes, and videos spread rapidly online (Awan & Zempi, 2015).

Without Islamic media to counter these narratives, the public perception of Islam will be shaped entirely by hostile sources. This directly threatens *ḥifẓ al-dīn* by turning people away from Islam and causing doubt among Muslims. The Prophet himself recognized the power of media in the form of poetry and oratory, encouraging his Companions to respond to hostile poetry with their own. In the digital age, this principle extends to all forms of media (Al-Qaradhawi, 2000; Ramadan, 2017).

The *maslahah* of Islamic media is *dharuriyyah* in the digital age. Empirical research lends some support to this claim without endorsing it uncritically: a systematic review by Hashmi et al. (2021) of studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science found that, across the literature examined, negative or extremism-linked portrayals of Islam in social media were more frequently documented than positive ones, although representations varied considerably by platform and context. Ahmanideen (2024) further documents how anti-Muslim narratives circulating on social media have been linked

to offline hostility toward mosques and Muslim communities. Rather than assuming that hostile actors control all dominant platforms outright, the more defensible claim is that Muslims currently occupy an uneven position in a contested information space, one in which credible Islamic voices are frequently outcompeted, though not entirely absent. Establishing dedicated Islamic media platforms is therefore best understood as a response to this asymmetry rather than to a presumed total absence of Muslim representation.

4. Islamic Publications (المنشورات الإسلامية)

Islamic publications include books, pamphlets, and e-books explaining Islamic teachings, responding to misconceptions, and presenting the beauty of Islamic civilization. Before the digital age, printed books were the primary medium for disseminating knowledge. Today, e-books and PDFs have made publishing more accessible and affordable (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 668).

The contribution to ḥifẓ al-dīn through publications is similar to that of media but with greater depth. Books allow for detailed, nuanced discussions that social media posts cannot accommodate. They serve as permanent resources that can be referenced for generations. Many of the most influential works of Islamic thought throughout history have been books (Ahmed, 2018).

The *maslahah* of Islamic publications is ḥajjiyyah that approaches dharuriyyah. While media can provide quick responses to current events, publications are needed for comprehensive, systematic presentations of Islamic teachings. Without them, Muslims rely on fragmented, decontextualized information from social media, which is prone to misunderstanding and misrepresentation (Hasan, 2019).

5. Da'wah Cadres Training (إعداد الكوادر الدعوية)

Da'wah cadres are trained preachers and workers who can be deployed to various communities, including those that are difficult to access. They are the human capital of da'wah. Without competent, well-trained cadres, even the best-funded da'wah projects will fail (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 668; Hamid & Saari, 2021).

The contribution to ḥifẓ al-dīn through cadre training is indirect but essential. Cadres are the ones who implement da'wah projects. They teach in schools, lead study circles, deliver sermons, create content, and engage in personal outreach. The quality of da'wah depends entirely on the quality of its human resources (Hasan, 2019).

The *maslahah* of cadre training is dharuriyyah. Without trained cadres, da'wah becomes amateurish, uncoordinated, and ineffective. This is particularly critical in contexts where Muslims are a minority or where they face active opposition. Trained cadres know how to navigate difficult circumstances, respond to challenges, and present Islam persuasively (Ahmed, 2018).

6. Support for Persecuted Preachers (دعم الدعاة المضطهدين)

In many parts of the world, Muslim preachers face harassment, arrest, and violence for their da'wah activities. Al-Qaradhawi (1973, Vol. 2, p. 668) includes supporting these preachers as part of *fi sabilillāh*. This support can take various forms: financial assistance to cover living expenses and legal fees, advocacy to raise awareness of their situation, and, in some cases, assistance with relocation to safer areas.

The contribution to ḥifẓ al-dīn is direct but context-dependent. When a preacher is persecuted for his da'wah activities, supporting him enables him to continue his work. It also sends a message that the Muslim community stands behind its preachers, potentially deterring persecution (Hamid & Saari, 2021).

The *maslahah* of supporting persecuted preachers is dharuriyyah for the individuals involved and ḥajjiyyah for the broader community. For a specific community that has lost its only qualified preacher, the need is essential. For the global Muslim community, supporting persecuted preachers is a moral obligation that also serves the long-term goal of preserving da'wah capacity worldwide (Hasan, 2019).

Classification of Maslahah in Al-Qaradhawi's Expansion

Based on the analysis above, the six types of activities can be classified according to the level of *maslahah* they serve. The following table summarizes this classification:

Table 1. summary of the six types of activities classification

Activity	Primary Maslahah Level	Justification
Da'wah centers	Hajiyyah (becoming Dharuriyyah)	Essential where anti-Islamic propaganda is widespread
Islamic study centers	Hajiyyah (approaching Dharuriyyah)	Intellectual foundation needed to address modern challenges
Islamic media	Dharuriyyah (in digital age)	Countering misinformation is essential for survival
Islamic publications	Hajiyyah	Complementary but important for depth
Da'wah cadres training	Dharuriyyah	Human capital essential for all da'wah activities
Support for persecuted preachers	Dharuriyyah (for individuals); Hajiyyah (for community)	Enables continuation of da'wah under oppression

What is striking about this classification is that most of the activities serve *maslahah* at the *hajiyyah* level that is approaching or has become *dharuriyyah* in the digital age. This supports al-Qaradhawi's implicit argument that the expansion of *fi sabilillah* is not an arbitrary liberalization but a necessity driven by changing circumstances while maintaining the fixed objective of preserving religion.

It should be emphasized that these six activities do not contribute to *hifz al-din* to the same degree or in the same manner. Islamic media and *da'wah* cadres training exhibit the most direct and time-sensitive contribution: their absence produces an immediate representational and human-capital vacuum that hostile or unqualified actors readily fill. Da'wah centers and Islamic study centers contribute more indirectly, by shaping the intellectual and institutional conditions under which correct religious understanding is sustained over time; their effects are cumulative rather than immediate. Islamic publications occupy an intermediate position, reinforcing rather than initiating the correction of misinformation. Support for persecuted preachers, finally, is essential wherever it applies but is contingent on the specific circumstance of persecution rather than a general condition of digital disruption. Recognizing this gradation matters for practical allocation: zakat institutions facing limited *fi sabilillah* funds should not treat the six categories as interchangeable, but should weight allocation toward the activities whose absence produces the most immediate and severe harm to *hifz al-din* in a given context.

Comparison with Other Contemporary Scholars' Maslahah Applications

To contextualize al-Qaradhawi's *maslahah* reasoning, it is useful to compare his approach with that of other contemporary scholars.

Rashid Ridha (d. 1935) applied *maslahah* more expansively, allowing zakat funds for all public interests, including building mosques, schools, and hospitals (Ridha, 1990, Vol. 10, p. 432). His reasoning was that any activity benefiting Muslims serves the purpose of *fi sabilillah*. However, al-Qaradhawi criticizes this as too broad, arguing that it ignores the principle of restriction (*al-haşr*) in the zakat verse (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 656). From a *maslahah* perspective, Ridha prioritizes the public interest over the specific wording of the text.

Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963) offered a middle position. He distinguished between individual ownership (using "li") and public ownership (using "fi") in the zakat verse (Shaltut, 2001, p. 100). He allowed building mosques with zakat funds only in exceptional circumstances, such as when the mosque is the only one in the village. This is a more nuanced *maslahah* application than Ridha's because it requires evidence of pressing need (*al-maslahah al-mulihah*) before allowing expansion (Shaltut, 2001, p. 129).

Wahbah al-Zuhayli (d. 2015) generally follows the classical *jumhūr* position but makes an exception for pilgrims who have exhausted their provisions (Al-Zuhayli, 1430 H, Vol. 2, pp. 782-784). This

Tariq Ramadan (2009; 2017) represents a more contemporary approach that can be compared with al-Qaradhawi's along three criteria: textual authority, the scope of *maqāṣid*, and the locus of interpretive legitimacy. On textual authority, al-Qaradhawi anchors his expansion in a two-step juristic method — *bayānī* analysis followed by *ta'līlī qiyās* — that remains tethered to the specific wording and legal cause of the zakat verse (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, pp. 656-660). Ramadan, by contrast, argues for a contextualist reading in which the higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur'an and Sunnah take precedence over the literal meaning of specific texts, a more text-transcending position. On the scope of *maqāṣid*, al-Qaradhawi restricts legitimate expansion to activities causally linked to *nuṣrat al-Islām* (supporting Islam), whereas Ramadan's ethics of liberation would likely extend *fi ṣabīlillāh* further, to social-justice and human-dignity activism not necessarily tied to religious defense in the narrower sense. On interpretive legitimacy, al-Qaradhawi continues to locate authority in classical *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodology applied by qualified jurists, while Ramadan's approach opens greater space for context-driven reasoning by contemporary Muslim intellectuals, a move Brown (2015) criticizes as risking the erosion of textual authority altogether. The two therefore converge in treating *maqāṣid* as a legitimate normative resource for expanding *fi ṣabīlillāh* beyond physical *jihād*, but diverge sharply on how much interpretive weight *maqāṣid* should carry relative to the text and on how far the resulting category should extend.

Al-Qaradhawi's *maslahah* reasoning can be situated between these positions. He is more restrictive than Ridha (rejecting mosques, schools, hospitals) but more expansive than al-Zuhayli (including intellectual and cultural *jihad*). He requires evidence of pressing need (*al-maslahah al-mulīhah*) before allowing expansion, similar to Shaltut, but applies this to a broader range of activities relevant to the digital age. This positions him as a moderate contextualist who respects textual boundaries while responding to contemporary challenges.

It is also worth asking whether the same conclusion would follow under a differently structured *maqāṣid* framework. Jasser Auda's (2008) systems-oriented approach to *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* replaces al-Shāṭibī's linear hierarchy of *darūriyyah*, *ḥājiyyah*, and *taḥsīniyyah* with criteria such as wholeness, openness, and interrelatedness of the legal system as a whole. Applied here, Auda's framework would not ask whether *da'wah*-related activities have individually climbed from *ḥājiyyah* to *darūriyyah*, but whether excluding them would leave the *maqāṣid* system as a whole less capable of achieving *ḥifẓ al-dīn* under changed digital conditions. On that test, the six activities would likely still be affirmed, since their absence measurably reduces the system's capacity to respond to digital threats — but the justification would rest on systemic resilience rather than on a threshold being crossed within a fixed hierarchy. This convergence across two structurally different *maqāṣid* models strengthens, rather than merely repeats, al-Qaradhawi's own reasoning, and shows that the conclusion is not an artifact of adopting al-Shāṭibī's hierarchy specifically.

The Digital Age as a Justification for *Maslahah* Expansion

The digital age presents unique challenges to the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*). Several scholars have documented how social media and digital platforms are used to spread anti-Islamic content (Ali, 2021; Awan & Zempi, 2015; Poole, 2010). A study of YouTube comments found that Islamophobic content receives more engagement (likes, shares, replies) than pro-Islamic content, suggesting that algorithms may amplify hate speech (Hassan, 2022).

Moreover, the ease of creating and sharing content means that anyone can present themselves as an authority on Islam. This has led to the proliferation of unqualified "online scholars" who issue fatwas without proper training or methodology (Bunt, 2018). The result is confusion among ordinary Muslims about who to trust and what to believe.

The move from "beneficial" to "necessary" can be stated as an explicit chain of reasoning rather than asserted directly. First, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* requires that Muslims retain reliable access to sound religious knowledge and are not systematically misled about the content of their faith. Second, the digital conditions described above — algorithmic amplification of sensational content, the

proliferation of unqualified online authorities, and the documented prevalence of negative representations of Islam (Bunt, 2018; Hashmi et al., 2021) — create a material risk that this access is degraded for a significant portion of Muslim internet users, particularly younger generations. Third, applying the four-part criteria set out in the Method section, this risk is severe, lacks an equally effective substitute, threatens proximate harm to religious understanding, and is pressing rather than speculative. Fourth, and therefore, the activities that directly counteract this risk — authoritative Islamic media, qualified scholars and preachers, research-based responses to contemporary questions, in-depth publications, trained *da'wah* cadres, and support for preachers under pressure — satisfy the operational definition of *darūriyyah* adopted here, rather than remaining merely *hājiyyah*. This does not mean each activity is necessary to the same degree, a point addressed further below; it means only that all six pass the threshold from optional benefit to essential safeguard under present digital conditions.

Al-Qaradhawi himself recognized the severity of the threat. He wrote:

"In the present age, warfare is no longer purely physical but takes the form of intellectual warfare (*al-ghazwu al-fikrī*), whose dangers are greater than physical warfare. The enemies of Islam today attack Muslim beliefs, spread doubts about the Qur'an, distort the image of the Prophet, and promote Western cultural values that contradict Islamic teachings" (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 657).

This recognition of changed circumstances is the foundation of his *maslahah* argument. The objective—preserving religion—remains the same. But the means must adapt. Just as the early Muslims used swords and spears to defend Islam in their context, contemporary Muslims must use pens, tongues, cameras, keyboards, and digital platforms to defend Islam in the digital age.

Criticisms and Counterarguments

The *maslahah* legitimacy of al-Qaradhawi's expansion is not without critics. Some scholars argue that any expansion of *fi sabilillah* beyond physical *jihad* is a departure from the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the *salaf* (early generations) (Al-Albani, 1993; Ibn Uthaymin, 2001). They cite the same hadiths al-Qaradhawi uses—about the dusty feet, the morning and evening journey—as evidence that *fi sabilillah* in the context of *zakat* refers specifically to physical combat.

Their objection is that while intellectual and cultural activities are undoubtedly good deeds (*a'mal ṣāliḥah*), they should be funded from other sources such as *infaq*, *sadaqah*, *waqf*, or government budgets, not from *zakat*. *Zakat* is for the poor and needy first. Expanding it to other categories risks depriving the poor of their rights (Ibn Uthaymin, 2001).

Al-Qaradhawi responds to this criticism in two ways. First, he notes that *zakat* distribution to *fi sabilillah* is already recognized in the Qur'an and by *ijmā'*. The only issue is the scope of meaning. Since *jihad* in the sense of supporting Islam is the *'illah* (legal cause) of the ruling, any activity that achieves this *'illah* may also receive *zakat* (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 658).

Second, he emphasizes that *zakat* for *fi sabilillah* is only supplementary, not primary. The main funding for these activities should come from other sources. *Zakat* is used only when other sources are insufficient or when there is a pressing need (*maslahah mulīḥah*) (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 667). This addresses the concern about depriving the poor by establishing a clear priority: first, the basic needs of the poor, then other *aṣnāf*, and finally, *fi sabilillah* for urgent *da'wah* needs.

Another criticism comes from those who argue that expanding *fi sabilillah* could lead to abuse, with *zakat* funds being used for political activities, partisan propaganda, or personal projects under the guise of "supporting Islam." This is a valid concern. However, al-Qaradhawi addresses it by emphasizing the condition that the activity must truly be in support of Islam, not for personal or group interests (Al-Qaradhawi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 660). Implementation and oversight are separate issues that require proper governance mechanisms.

More broadly, the analysis so far has relied primarily on al-Qaradhawi's own juristic reasoning as the basis for legitimating his expansion, a limitation worth making explicit. A more critical test is whether the same conclusion survives when evaluated from positions al-Qaradhawi does not himself hold. Under the restrictive *salafi* position of al-Albani (1993) and Ibn Uthaymin

(2001), the *maṣlaḥah* argument developed here would be rejected outright, since these scholars treat the textual scope of *fi ṣabilillāh* as settled by consensus and view *maṣlaḥah*-based expansion as impermissible innovation regardless of digital-age circumstances; on this view, the activities identified would remain praiseworthy but ineligible for zakat funding. Under Rashid Riḍā's expansive *maṣlaḥah 'āmmah* position (Riḍā, 1990), by contrast, the six activities would be legitimated with even less argumentative effort, since almost any communal benefit qualifies. Al-Qaradhawi's *ḍarūriyyah*-through-context argument is therefore neither the most permissive nor the most restrictive available reading; it occupies a middle position whose distinctive contribution is precisely the requirement of demonstrated, context-specific urgency (*al-maṣlaḥah al-mulḥiḥah*) that neither the salafi nor the Riḍā position requires. Acknowledging this range of alternative outcomes clarifies that the legitimacy defended in this study is legitimacy within a moderate maqāṣid-based methodology, not a conclusion that would command agreement across all contemporary juristic positions.

Implications of the Study

This study has several implications for Islamic legal theory and practice.

For Islamic legal theory, the study demonstrates that maqāṣid al-syarī'ah and *maṣlaḥah* are not merely abstract concepts but practical tools for evaluating *ijtihād*. Al-Qaradhawi's expansion of *fi ṣabilillāh* is methodologically sound, but its ultimate legitimacy depends on whether it serves the higher objectives of *syariah*. This study has shown that it does, particularly the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) in the digital age.

The study also demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between different levels of *maṣlaḥah*. Not all beneficial activities are equal. Some are *ḍarūriyyah* (essential), some are *ḥajīyyah* (complementary), and some are *tahsīniyyah* (embellishment). Al-Qaradhawi's expansion focuses on activities that are *ḥajīyyah* approaching *ḍarūriyyah* in the digital context, not on those that are purely *tahsīniyyah*.

For fatwa institutions, this study provides a framework for evaluating similar issues. When considering whether a new activity can be included in *fi ṣabilillāh*, scholars should ask: (1) Does this activity serve the preservation of religion? (2) Is there a pressing need (*maṣlaḥah mulīḥah*) for it? (3) Can it be funded from other sources? (4) What is the level of *maṣlaḥah* it serves? Only activities that serve *ḥajīyyah* or *ḍarūriyyah* needs and cannot be funded from other sources should be considered.

For zakat institutions such as BAZNAS and LAZ, this study provides practical guidance. Zakat funds allocated to *fi ṣabilillāh* should prioritize the six types of activities al-Qaradhawi identified, particularly those related to digital *da'wah* and countering misinformation. However, institutions must also ensure that the rights of other *aṣnāf*—especially the poor and needy—are not neglected. The priority should always be: first, *ḍarūriyyah* needs of the poor; second, other *aṣnāf*; third, *fi ṣabilillāh* activities that meet the *maṣlaḥah* criteria.

For further research, this study opens several avenues. Empirical research is needed on how zakat institutions in Indonesia and other Muslim countries currently distribute *fi ṣabilillāh* funds and whether they align with al-Qaradhawi's criteria. Comparative research could examine how other contemporary scholars—such as Abdullah bin Bayyah, Muḥammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, or Muḥammad al-Ghazali—treat this issue. Research could also explore the application of *maṣlaḥah* to other *aṣnāf* of zakat, such as *mu'allaf* (those whose hearts are to be reconciled) or *ghārimīn* (debtors).

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged.

First, the study is based on a single primary source—al-Qaradhawi's *Fiqh al-Zakāh*. While this is his most comprehensive work on zakat, his views may have developed or been elaborated in his other works. A comprehensive study would need to examine his entire corpus, including his fatwas, lectures, and articles on related topics.

Second, the study relies on al-Qaradhawi's own examples of activities that fall under *fi ṣabilillāh*. He did not explicitly formulate the *maṣlaḥah* criteria we have derived. Our classification is an

interpretation of his examples, not an explicit statement from him. Other scholars might derive different criteria or classify activities differently.

Third, the study does not include empirical data on how zakat institutions actually distribute *fi sabilillāh* funds. We have argued theoretically that al-Qaradhawi's expansion is legitimate, but we have not verified whether institutions implementing this expansion maintain the safeguards he emphasized (e.g., not neglecting the poor, using zakat only supplementary).

Fourth, the study focuses primarily on the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) as the relevant *maqāshid*. A more comprehensive study would also examine how these activities contribute to the other four *maqāshid*—preservation of life, intellect, lineage, and property. Some of these have been touched upon, but a systematic analysis across all five *maqāshid* would strengthen the argument.

Conclusion

This article has examined whether Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's expansion of *fi sabilillāh* as a zakat recipient can be legitimated by *maslahah* considerations from the perspective of *maqāshid al-syarī'ah*, with particular focus on the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) in the digital age.

Three main conclusions emerge from the analysis.

First, al-Qaradhawi's expansion is firmly grounded in *maslahah* reasoning. He explicitly recognizes that the context of supporting Islam has changed in the digital age, with intellectual and cultural warfare posing greater dangers than physical warfare. This recognition of changed circumstances (*taghayyur al-aḥkām bi taghayyur al-azminah*) is the foundation of his *maslahah* argument. The objective—preserving religion—remains constant, but the means must adapt to new threats.

all contribute to *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, though not uniformly or to the same degree. Islamic media and *da'wah* cadres training bear the most direct and time-sensitive relationship to digital-age threats, while *da'wah* centers, study centers, and publications contribute more cumulatively, and support for persecuted preachers remains essential but context-dependent. Each activity nonetheless addresses a specific dimension of the threat to Islam in the digital age: misinformation, intellectual confusion, lack of authoritative guidance, insufficient human capital, and persecution of those who defend Islam.

Third, these activities serve *maslahah* at the level of *ḥajjiyyah* that has become *dharuriyyah* in the digital context. In normal circumstances, *da'wah* might be considered *ḥajjiyyah* (complementary). But when enemy forces are actively spreading anti-Islamic propaganda through sophisticated media and well-funded campaigns, *da'wah* becomes *dharuriyyah* (essential). Without it, the preservation of religion—the highest of the five essential *maqāshid*—is threatened.

Al-Qaradhawi's position represents a moderate *maslahah* application that avoids two extremes: the rigidity of those who restrict *fi sabilillāh* to physical jihad only, and the laxity of those who expand it to all public interests. He maintains the textual boundaries established by the Qur'an and Sunnah while allowing contextual adaptation when needed to achieve the higher objectives of *syariah*.

For zakat institutions in Indonesia and elsewhere, this study offers practical guidance. Zakat funds allocated to *fi sabilillāh* should prioritize the six types of activities identified, with particular attention to digital media and intellectual counter-narratives. However, institutions must also maintain safeguards: ensuring that the rights of the poor and other *aṣnāf* are not neglected, using zakat only as supplementary funding, and requiring evidence of pressing need before allocating funds to *fi sabilillāh*.

Future research should examine empirically how zakat institutions implement these principles, compare al-Qaradhawi's approach with those of other contemporary scholars, and explore the application of *maslahah* to other zakat categories. Such research will further enrich the understanding of how classical Islamic legal concepts can be applied effectively to address contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to the sources of Islamic law.

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