

Striving in the Path of God: Fethullah Gülen's Views on Jihad

by Asma Afsaruddin

Jihad ('struggle', 'striving') in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* is a term with multiple inflections. The reiterated Qur'anic phrase *al-jihad fi sabil Allah* ('striving in the path of God') allows for that striving to be accomplished in myriad ways. After surveying a range of exegeses of relevant Qur'anic verses and early hadith works, the paper shows how fully Fethullah Gülen's emphasis on jihad as a means of personal, moral, spiritual and social renewal and transformation is in line with the earliest meanings found in exegetical and hadith works. Such a traditional, historical understanding runs counter to recent, polemical assertions that jihad is a monovalent term requiring unremitting armed combat against non-Muslims. The paper demonstrates that contemporary Muslim thinkers like Gülen, who offer a more expansive and multi-faceted reading of what it means to 'strive in the path of God', are harking back to earlier, and thus more historically authentic, understandings of jihad and its moral purview.

Panel:
Evaluation of Gülen's
Thought and Methodology

Venue:
Old Theatre,
LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00	Presentation: 10	

Asma Afsaruddin (PhD, Johns Hopkins University, 1993): Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, USA. Special interests: religious and political thought of Islam, Qur'an and hadith studies, Islamic intellectual history, and gender issues. Dr Afsaruddin has lectured widely in the US, Europe, and the Middle East, and is the author of several monographs and over fifty articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries on various aspects of Islamic thought. Among recent publications: *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007); *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002); (ed.) *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiation of Female 'Public' Space in Islamic/ate Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); (ed. with Mathias Zahniser) *Humanism, Culture, and Language in the Near East : Essays in Honor of Georg Krotkoff* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

**Asma
Afsaruddin**

a.afsaruddin@gulenconference.org.uk