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F R I D A Y



## A Sunni Muslim Scholar's Humanitarian and Religious Rejection of Violence Against Civilians

by Y. Alp Aslandogan, Bekir Cinar

This paper analyses the multi-faceted response of a Sunni-Hanafi scholar, Fethullah Gülen, to the phenomenon of violence against civilians under a religious rhetoric. Gülen's response involves four components: (a) humanitarian, (b) religious, (c) political or realist, and (d) practical/educational. (a) Gülen categorically condemns acts of violence against innocent non-combatants including women and children as inhuman. (b) Gülen sets out the principles of Islamic jurisprudence that invalidate any declaration of war by individuals or groups: hence, such self-declared wars under the banner of Islam cannot be regarded as legitimate. He refutes 'the end justifies the means' argument, calling it a Marxist-Communist rhetoric, with no Islamic justification whatever. (c) While discussing misunderstanding, misrepresentation and abuse of religious texts, Gülen hints at the presence of individuals, interest groups, and other entities that benefit from friction and violent conflict. He suggests that the possibility should be considered that some individuals have been manipulated, perhaps even 'hypnotised' through special drugs, to carry out actions they would otherwise not carry out. (d) Gülen offers practical approaches to rooting out the problem of hate-mongering and violent conflict. The underlying dynamic of this approach is to provide, through education, mutual understanding, respect, opportunity and hope. Only educational institutions that foster interfaith and intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and respect, and offer hope of upward mobility, can provide lasting solutions. Concepts such as 'love of creation due to the Creator' can be located in every culture and spiritual tradition. Gülen's own emphasis on Islamic spirituality provides an example that is particularly significant for Muslims: his argument against terrorism and for peaceful interfaith relations is based upon the authoritative view of the Sunni tradition, to which 90% of the world's Muslims adhere.

**Panel:**  
Civility and Non-Violence  
in Gülen's Thought and  
Practice

**Venue:**  
B202,  
Brunei Gallery, SOAS

26.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00		Presentation 08
15:10-17:00		

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