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S A T U R D A Y

Promoting Human Rights Values in the Muslim World: the Case of the Gülen Movement

by *Ozcan Keles*

Panel:
Gülen Movement in Peace
Building and
Conflict Resolution

Venue:
D202,
Clement House, LSE

26.10.07 Panels	Parallel Session 1	Parallel Session 2
9:30-11:30		
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		Presentation: 12

The premise of this paper is that human rights values are a persistent theme of Fethullah Gülen's thought and *tajdid* and expressed by the Gülen movement through example. That *tajdid* is collectively constructed and communicated by allowing for adaptation and indigenisation in flexible response to different socio-cultural contexts. What is more, Gülen's views on democracy, pluralism, human rights and freedom of belief directly promote human rights values and norms. The paper argues that the Muslim world is very important to Gülen's overall aspiration for an inclusive civilisation and thus the movement is now active in most parts of that world. In time, as in Turkey, Gülen's ideas will enable and empower the periphery in Muslim societies to influence the centre ground and open the way for wider enjoyment of freedom and human rights.

The paper is in three sections. The first looks at the underlying dynamics of Gülen's influence and the nature of his *tajdid*, to assess whether his influence is transferable elsewhere. The second appraises the content of Gülen's *tajdid* arguing that human rights values are an inherent theme of his discourse on Islam. Here, the paper analyses Gülen's views on Anatolian Muslimness, democracy and politics, human rights and freedom of belief, illustrating Gülen's incremental *ijtihad* on temporal punishment for apostasy in Islamic law. The third part traces the movement's activities in the Muslim world, arguing that the movement has now entered a phase of adolescence, and asks whether Gülen's *tajdid* and discourse, through the practice of the movement, can indeed promote human rights values in this world.

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Ozcan Keles (member of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn; Bar Course from Inns of Court School of Law, 2005; LLM in Human Rights Law from SOAS, University of London, 2002; LLB, 2000): a barrister, studying for PhD on 'Muslim minorities in Europe – Human Rights in the Muslim world: Promoting Freedom of Belief and Harmonisation in International Human Rights Law' at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex, where he holds the Scholarship Award of 2006. Research interests include: international human rights law, the European Court of Human Rights, freedom of belief, and the Gülen movement.