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**BULENT KENES**

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National

### The Einstein of the Islamic world

LONDON - Let's think about a man born into an ordinary family of meager means in a suburban Anatolian town. He sets out on that adventure called life all alone, deprived of a formal education. But he educates and raises himself through unconventional means. Despite this lack of a formal education everything he says is for the good of humanity. He attracts a great amount of attention as time goes by. As his value is revealed little by little, small groups of people start uniting around him, and he always channels the smallest interest shown in him to benevolent causes.

He sets out on a new journey -- one that no one could have even dreamt of -- with a group of people; a small group, but selfless and devoted, nonetheless. All through this journey, he considers serving people as a way to serve God and avoids treating anyone less favorably than anyone else. He instills the principle of "loving love and hating hatred" into his followers. The number of those around him who have made cleansing their thoughts of hatred and anger the cause of their lives grows. So, too, do the effects of this love grow, gradually turning into schools, dialogue centers and cultural centers.

He wages a war on intercultural/religious hatred and on the lack of understanding that blackens lives across the world. He mobilizes hundreds of thousands for intercultural/religious dialogue and unconditional tolerance in a world riddled with terrorism, war and fear; a world in which people "otherize" one another and in which the idea of a "clash of civilizations" is accepted by many. These hundreds of thousands turn into millions with time. The journey he once set out on alone grows like an avalanche and becomes the greatest civil movement in Turkey. It grows beyond the borders of Anatolia, becoming a supranational phenomenon.

The story I have told you is not one of an ordinary man. Well, it couldn't be. This is the story of a living legend, namely Fethullah Gülen, and of his thoughts and actions.

At a conference titled "Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement" held in London, sociologists, academics and researchers from all around the world discussed and analyzed, for two days without

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stop, the point this great legend has reached, trying to conceptualize the dynamics of this movement. Some defined Gülen's movement of love and unconditional tolerance as "the creation of a new supranational elite," while some presented the Gülen movement as an example of the global "social capital." Some compared this movement to that of Catholic Jesuits who carry out their missionary activities in the guise of education, and others compared it to the Quaker movement. Some scholars saw this global civil movement inspired by Gülen as representative of "the cultural third way between the secular Kemalists and Islamists, and between the local and the global," while some presented Gülen as a spiritual and visionary leader.

Though the interpretations of scholars from diverse religions and nations differed according to their own field of studies, there was one point they all agreed upon: Nobody can any longer remain indifferent toward this movement, which has now become a global phenomenon whose impact is felt all over the world today.

The most striking words came during the discussion session of the conference where general assessments were made. The last speaker of the discussion session, Professor Simon Robinson of Leeds Metropolitan University, said the final words after assessing the conference itself and the worldwide activities of the Gülen movement, which the conference focused on. In his address he said, "Fethullah Gülen is the Einstein of the Islamic world."

I'm sure Mr. Robinson likened Gülen to Einstein in order to express the highest compliment he could ever make about Gülen and the movement he initiated. However, having attended the conference I believe with all sincerity that time will accept and appreciate that Gülen and his movement have, in the service of humanity, realized things that far exceed what Einstein achieved.

29.10.2007

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