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## > Columnists



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Columnists

### Muslim world in transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement

A conference was held in London on Oct. 25-27 to discuss contributions of the Gülen movement, led by Fethullah Gülen. This conference was launched at the House of Lords and was attended by several members of parliament, lords, baronesses, newspaper editors, academics, dignitaries and high-ranking civil servants. The conference's main theme centered on the Gülen movement's actual and potential positive contribution to transition in the Muslim world vis-à-vis education and dialogue for a lasting peace, democracy, peaceful coexistence and human rights.

The conference proceedings book has already been published by the Leeds Metropolitan University Press and describes the movement as a leading movement in contemporary Turkey with a universal educational and interfaith agenda that aims to promote creative and constructive positions on issues such as democracy, multiculturalism, globalization and interfaith dialogue in the context of secular modernity.

As promised in the preface of the book, Gülen's re-reading of religious texts in the context of a renewal and re-interpretation of Islam that can take part in the building of a fully humane society in Europe also featured in the deliberations of the conference.

Many presenters underlined that the Gülen movement is renewing Islamic discourse and practices in tune with contemporary times without boasting that it is doing so. Many of the movement's activities in the Muslim world were elaborated on in detail from an academic perspective for the first time. Some papers argued that Gülen's understanding of Anatolian Muslimness and his tajdid (renewal) can be transferred with some contextual modifications to other parts of the Muslim world as well as to Muslims living in the West.

The conference was not without criticism. E-mails were sent to members of the editorial board asking them to call off the conference, labeling the Gülen movement an extension of the imperialist West and a project of moderate Islam fashioned by the US that seeks to destroy

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Many scholars who participated in the conference commented about how they were surprised to see that the author(s) of these e-mails naively expected serious scholars to believe these groundless and unsubstantiated accusations, adding that these e-mails helped them understand Turkey more in terms of the old elite's adamant, but desperate, fight against the prospects of open society.

Many papers agreed that Gülen is a contemporary Rumi. It is no coincidence that Rumi -- like Gülen -- was also misunderstood by some in his lifetime. Some reactionary conservatives in Rumi's time criticized him harshly because he was open to "the other" and accepted everyone as they were. Some even claimed that Rumi was not a Muslim at all while others claimed that he was a spy of the occupying Mongols. Some even suggested that Rumi was after political power. Looking in retrospect, it is crystal clear how odd these accusations really are.

Coming from and continuing in the same tradition, it is not surprising then that Gülen faces similar odd accusations directed at him by those who see the world from a narrow perspective. Likewise, sharing the same fate with Rumi makes Gülen a Rumi of this age.

28.10.2007

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- **the other**  
I don't think opening up to the "other" at this time is wise idea.becuse of the nature of Islam the

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