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BULENT KENES

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Diplomacy

Positive developments occur despite everything

LONDON - Turkey has been afflicted by one trouble after another in recent weeks. While losing groups of soldiers, our country is being forced into a process without a certain end. With terrorist acts escalating on one side, there exists deep apprehension as to what sort of complications a cross-border operation is likely to generate on the other. With each martyred soldier put into the ground, a red-hot cinder falls into our hearts.

Perhaps the only good thing about this tough process is that our national unity and integrity have been put to a vital test and our entire nation, Turks and Kurds alike, has been doing well on this test so far. Another element wherein we can find consolation is that the Turkish economy, sociocultural life and political mechanisms continue to function like a clock, just as would befit a great country, despite the horrific terrorist attacks and the plans for a cross-border operation triggered by these attacks. Turkey continues walking on its path with the determination, fortitude and maturity peculiar to modern and powerful countries, despite all the villainous efforts of its enemies.

Today I would like to mention a pleasant development in this column, to take your focus away from the intense agenda the darkness of terror enveloping the country has been trying to capture. I'm penning this column in London, nowadays a scene for yet another success of the Turkish civil movement and lobbying. A conference titled "Muslim World In Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement" -- inaugurated yesterday with the attendance of a great number of politicians from the House of Lords, academics and media members -- is pointing to a new peak on the route where the Turkish civil movement has covered a great distance.

Even looking at the list of organizers of the conference would cast enough light on what we are trying to say. The conference is being held at the initiative of the London-based Dialogue Society and with the support of the House of Lords, the London School of Economics, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, the University of Birmingham, the Irish School of Ecumenics, Leeds Metropolitan University,

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the London Middle East Institute and The Middle East Institute. At the conference supported by the most important and prestigious universities, world-famous academics will present 49 scientific papers selected by a scientific advisory board from among 150 papers and these selected papers are to be widely discussed.

According to a statement made by Dr. İhsan Yılmaz, who organized the conference, the meeting is aimed at deeply scrutinizing developments in the Islamic world in light of global developments that have occurred, especially in the last couple of years. The conference also aims to meet the need for such a project, targeting in particular the bringing together of the official institutions of the West, civil society organizations, political groups, academic work and media groups. The conference, which will probably be a first for Turkey in terms of its magnitude, will draw attention to the positive developments occurring around Turkey's axis and form a scientific platform for the telling of positive things about Turkey and the Islamic world.

The anticipated results of these efforts highlight the horizon of the conference in light of the information given by Dr. Yılmaz: to have the European Union and Britain approach issues concerning the Islamic world from Turkey's viewpoint; to publicize the efforts of Turkey-based voluntary civil society organizations, which focus heavily on education and dialogue for a lasting peace, to the Western public and the academic world in particular; to subject the Gülen movement to an objective academic criticism with all its positive and negative aspects, to make a positive contribution to it and to bring out the aspects of the movement that can set an example for the Islamic world; to tell about the global mission the Gülen movement has taken upon itself for a lasting world peace and to underline the fact that there are also positive developments in the Islamic world.

The conference inaugurated in the House of Lords yesterday will continue today and tomorrow. Hundreds of academics, politicians and members of the media will be following the conference, which I think will make a great contribution to the appreciation of the Gülen movement in the world as well as in Turkey, as a Turkish civil initiative that makes huge efforts for the good of the whole of humanity and to spread the culture of living together in peace and tolerance in a multicultural and multi-religion world.

The Gülen movement -- the pride of Turkey and the Islamic world -- which certain segments in Turkey have been insistently disregarding and trying to denigrate and degrade through all sorts of nonsensical claims, far from appreciating it, has already attracted the attention of international academic circles of the social sciences and become a fundamental subject of research. Let it be known by friends and foes alike!

26.10.2007

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