

## **Islam and Terror: From the Perspective of Fethullah GÜLEN**

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To associate two radically opposed concepts, Islam and terror, seems nowadays to be considered a 'natural' reaction to contemporary events; thus we feel that we are under obligation to bring these two different terms together in our paper. The aim of this paper is to show that there is no direct relation between them. To do this we focus mainly on the question: what is the meaning of terror? We examine what Islam says about terror; the relationship between the notion of *jihad* and Islam; the status of suicide attacks in Islam; and the false justification of war in the modern world, which can only pave the way for terrorist actions. We address these issues from the perspectives of the distinguished and eminent Turkish scholar and thinker Fethullah Gülen. The paper concludes with a summary of the positive effects of the interfaith/cultural dialogue meetings initiated by Gülen both within and outside Turkey in order to promote national and international tolerance, peace and mutual understanding.

Although terrorist activities are defined with great difficulty today, terrorism's cruel and ruthless disregard of laws and ethics was shown by the attacks of 11 September. In addition, now that terrorists or their organisations potentially have access to chemical, nuclear and biological weapons, the possibility of killing large numbers of innocent people and mass destruction has increased to a frightening extent. Now everybody is vulnerable to a terrorist attack and many live in a continual state of fear. Today we know very well that these crimes are perpetrated across borders and cause global unrest and create anarchy, fear and uncertainty. We unfortunately observe that the terrorists who have unleashed this global calamity against all humanity, do not see themselves as guilty. Furthermore, their attacks on innocent people only serve to increase their internal solidarity, resistance, unity and conviction of their own righteousness. Consequently, these organised activities produce in our modern world polarity between 'us' and 'them'. It is a great pity that, similarly to the terrorists, some media members, scholars, politicians, strategists and other institutions must be held responsible for this polarisation. We observe sadly that in recent years people easily associate our common problem, namely terrorism, with Islam and Muslims, and thus Muslims are quickly categorised as 'them'. The approach of Fethullah Gülen to this complex problem is extremely important due to the difficulty of formulating and sustaining a balanced view. Gülen's approach to terror eschews easy emotionalism and prejudice and seeks to embrace all humanity. Before examining Gülen's approach to the status of terror in Islam, we will consider the relationship between war and the notion of *jihad*.

As noted above, Islam and terror are now generally debated together; nonetheless, when we analyse the Islamic sources and tradition deeply it will be seen that there is no relationship between terror and Islam. In fact there is no religion in the world which condones terror. Because religions aim at assuring peace, happiness and prosperity, terror is, clearly incompatible with of their basic tenets. It is therefore not reasonable to attribute a terrorist act to the religion of a particular terrorist. The terrorist might be Muslim, Christian or Jewish but this does not mean that his or her act is an Islamic, a Christian, or a Jewish act. Thus the phrase 'Islamic terror' should be regarded as an insult to pious, sincere and innocent Muslims all over the world; a few uneducated, discontented, misled, deceived, brain-washed fanatics should not be taken to represent countless sincere believers. Clearly the association of Islam - which is etymologically derived from the Arabic root *silim* meaning 'peace', 'submission', 'deliverance' and 'safety'- with terrorism is a grievous mistake. From the Qur'anic perspective, attention should be paid to the relationship between the concept of *sulh* (peace) and the concept of *sâlih amal* (good deeds). *Sâlih*, like *sulh*, comes from the same root and means 'to cleave to peace or move towards peace.' Gülen holds that this peace is a result of *Tawhid* (Unity of God/Oneness of God) and that Islam, being a religion of Unity (*Tawhid*), ensures universal unity, equality, peace and cooperation among the humankind.<sup>244</sup> Briefly, Islam is a religion of peace and safety and 'Muslim' means a trustworthy, peaceful and reliable person. Thus when the Prophet Muhammed describes the Muslim he says that the people are safe from his hand and tongue.

It should first be emphasised that one of the greatest sins in Islam is killing a person. Allah says in Surah Nisa (4:93) 'If a man kills a believer intentionally, his reward is Hell for ever. Allah's wrath is against him and He has cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom.' The eminent companion exegete Abd Allah ibn Abbas interprets this verse to mean that the repentance of those who kill a believer purposefully will be denied, and they will be doomed to eternal Hell.<sup>245</sup> In fact the Qur'an promises not only the punishment of the killer in the hereafter but also the reward and punishment of the smallest (good and bad) action in the hereafter: 'Who do good an atom's weight and who do ill an atom's weight will see it then.'<sup>246</sup> Interestingly, when we look at the main source of Islam, namely the Qur'an, it will be seen that killing innocent people is mentioned together with associating other gods with Allah.<sup>247</sup> If the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Muhammed are examined deeply it will be seen that both offer a strong condemnation of terrorism, which is the most catastrophic calamity facing

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<sup>244</sup> Davut Aydın, *Tarih Boyunca Dinlerarası Diyalog*, İstanbul: Işık Yay. 2004, 227

<sup>245</sup> Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami al-Bayan an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, Egypt 1954, IV.295; Ergün Çapan, 'Suicide Attacks and Islam', *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks*, New Jersey: Light Pb 2004, 82

<sup>246</sup> Zilzâl, 99:7-8

<sup>247</sup> Furqân, 27:68

human kind today. Also, while killing a person is considered one of the most grievous sins in Islam, Islam also strictly prohibits suicide. According to Islamic law, one has no right to end one's own life or damage one's body; the argument that one owns one's life or body is erroneous. The reason for this lies in the Qur'an: 'Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment.'<sup>248</sup> The Qur'an thus gives honour and glory to all mankind equally, and considers killing one innocent person equal to killing the whole of human kind.<sup>249</sup> This point is crucially important because it demonstrates that Islam considers killing to be a crime committed against not only Muslims but all humanity. Moreover, the Qur'an places great emphasis on the virtue of peace<sup>250</sup> and this does not permit anyone to respond to an evil deed with one which is worse; instead, it says 'Repel the evil deed with one which is better...'<sup>251</sup>. Sound reason also suggests this teaching. Injustice should not be resisted by sowing the seeds of revulsion and hatred among the people. The Qur'an and the life of the Prophet show us various peaceful methods in the solution of this problem.

Another important Islamic concept is *jihad*. Considering the life of human kind the most honourable, and issuing many rules for the preservation of human happiness in this world and the hereafter, Islam acts with proper prudence to stop war, terror, injustice and anarchy. Nevertheless, we know that Islam allows Muslims to fight in particular situations, which, however, it regards as *arizi* (unnatural) and secondary. Peace, however, is essential in Islam. War is justified only to prevent chaos (which leads to wars), anarchy, tyranny, mischief, rebellion and so on. The Qur'an explains this issue in Surah Baqara (2:191) by stating 'tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter'. Thus war is justified in these exceptional circumstances. Islamic law acknowledges that Muslims have the right to protect their religion, life, property, progeny, and their honour and sacred values. But Islam was the first religion in human history to codify regulations of war on the basis of rights and justice. In Surah Mâida, Allah says 'O those who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety; and fear God for God is well acquainted with all that you do'. Attention should be paid to the issue that Islam allows war only to prevent anarchy; it does not sanctify war undertaken in order to compel people of other religions to convert to Islam or to bring the whole world under Islamic sovereignty, *Dar*

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<sup>248</sup> Isrâ, 17:70

<sup>249</sup> Mâida, 5:32 (whoever kills a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, is like one who kills the whole of mankind; and whoever saves a life, is like one who saves the lives of all mankind)

<sup>250</sup> Nisa, 4:128 (...peace is better...).

<sup>251</sup> Fussilet, 41:34

*al-Islam*. In other words, Islam contains no concept of 'holy war' in this issue. If a Muslim country is secure, war is not obligatory. In addition, it is not legitimate to declare war against any people only on the basis of their disbelief (*kufri*). There is also no claim in Islam to make the entire world Muslim. The Qur'an states clearly 'Not all people will believe'<sup>252</sup>

It is therefore a great pity that many people simplify the term *jihad* by associating it with war, offering shallow arguments concerning its meaning. This reductionist approach to the term narrows the comprehensiveness of the notion of *jihad*, because this key Qur'anic term is one of Islam's most important concepts, which embraces both the material and the spiritual life of mankind. *Jihad* does not mean simply a holy war. Although the word *jihad* and its conjugations are repeated some 34 times in the Qur'an, only four of these usages refer directly to war.<sup>253</sup> *Jihad*, as Fethullah Gülen has stated in general terms, is every kind of effort made by believers to obtain God's approval and to satisfy Him. There are various dimension of *jihad* (strife, endeavour and fighting). It is possible to categorise them as physical, psychological, sociological, and intellectual *jihad*s. For instance, the Messenger of God equate those who work for widows and the poor with those who make *jihad* for God.<sup>254</sup> In an other place the Prophet informs us that the greatest *jihad* is a *jihad* made against one's self.<sup>255</sup> As Fethullah Gülen explains: *Jihad* is purification and seeking perfection to please God; cleansing the mind, by means of Qur'anic verses, from false preconceptions, thoughts, and superstitions; expelling impurities from the heart through prayer; asking for forgiveness; austerity (*riyada*); and studying the Book, wisdom, and other knowledge with a purified heart and mind.<sup>256</sup> Interestingly, the Prophet's description of war as a minor *jihad* shows clearly the object of the major *jihad*: in Islamic understanding *jihad* means an individual's struggle against Satan. Briefly, *jihad* is a form of worship which embraces the material and spiritual dimensions of mankind. War is limited to the external/physical aspect of this struggle and constitutes only a small part of *jihad*. Islam fixes the boundaries of both major and minor *jihad*s and it should be remembered that these boundaries and dimensions are not only legal but also humane and ethical.

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<sup>252</sup> Ali Bulaç, 'Jihad', *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks*, New Jersey: Light Pb 2004, 56

<sup>253</sup> Tawba, 9:41, 73; Furqân, 25:52; Tahrim, 66:9. See Bekir Karliğa, 'Religion, Terror, War, and the Need for Global Ethics', *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks*, New Jersey: Light Pb 2004, 39

<sup>254</sup> Abu Abd Allah Muhammed b. Ismail al-Bukhari, *al-Jami al-Sahih*, İstanbul 1981 (Nafaqa, 1); Muslim b. Al-Hajjaj, *al-Jami al-Sahih*, İstanbul 1982, (Zuhd, 41); Karliğa, *ibid.*, 40

<sup>255</sup> Muhammed b. Isa al-Tirmidhi, *al-Jami al-Sahih*, Beirut nd. (Fadail al-Jihad, 2)

<sup>256</sup> Fethullah Gülen, in an interview with the Italian Journalist Michele Zanzucchi, p.2

We should now examine the Islamic principles concerning the rules of war. First of all Islam states clearly that individuals may not start a war on behalf of Muslims. One cannot issue a *fatwa* (legal pronouncement) to fight against another country, nation, group or individuals. The reason for this is quite simple: according to Islamic law, the declaration or initiation of a war is the duty of a State in accordance with certain principles. No companion during the lifetime of the Prophet declared a war individually. When the state initiates a war it must obey certain principles. According to Gülen, in war Islam defines the limits that constrain the treatment of the enemy. We see the best example of this at a time near the death of the Prophet. When he was ill, news came that the Northern Arabs, along with the Byzantines, were preparing an attack on Madina. The Prophet ordered the preparation of an army under the command of Uthama b. Zayd, and gave the following instructions to Uthama: Fight in God's way. Do not be cruel to people. Do not go against your covenant. Do not cut down trees bearing fruits. Do not slaughter livestock. Do not kill the pious who are secluded in monasteries, engaged in worship, or children and women...<sup>257</sup> The instructions of the Prophet were enshrined in Islamic legal literature, to the effect that the killing of non-combatants such as women, children, the elderly, the disabled is expressly forbidden.<sup>258</sup> There is no Islamic text which allows the killing of innocent civilians in war, because they are held to be not combatant (*muharib*). The Qur'an states clearly 'Fight in the cause of God those who fight you (who are liable and able to fight, and who participate actively in the fight) but do not transgress the limits; for God loves not transgressors' (Baqara, 2:190). The Arabic verb *yuqâtilûna* in the verse is of extreme importance. To explain this in grammatical terms, the mood (reciprocal form) in Arabic denotes 'participation' which, in this sense, means 'those who fall under the status of combatant'. Thus non-combatants are not to be fought against. This must be obeyed rule in war and applies equally stringently when war has not been declared. In addition to this, according to Islamic law, Muslims may not start a war without informing their enemy, and if the enemy calls on them to negotiate a settlement the Muslim forces must cease fighting.

Thus when the war starts Muslim fighters should not kill civilians; In deed, the Qur'an (Baqara, 2:190) warns Muslims not to transgress the limits of war even against the warriors of the enemy. The meaning of 'transgression' here is not to kill civilians, not to torture enemy's warriors, to respect the dead bodies of the enemy, to meet the basic needs of the enemy and to obey the rules of war. It is important to note that Islam prohibits transgression in the form of reprisal. For example, if the enemy's soldiers rape Muslim women, Muslim soldiers should not rape the enemy's women; this prohibition also applies to the torture of captured warriors, to attacks on civilians, and so on. It is well known that when the Muslims

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<sup>257</sup> Muhammed b. Umar b. Waqid, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, Oxford 1966, III.117-118; Hamza Aktan, 'Acts of Terror and Suicide Attacks in the Light of the Qur'an and the Sunna', *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks*, New Jersey: Light Pb 2004., 26

<sup>258</sup> Tahawi, *Sharh al-Maan al-Athar*, Beirut: Dar Kutub al-Ilmiyya 1996, III.224; Çapan, *ibid.*, 83

in Andalus (Spain) were expelled from the peninsula, some Muslims asked the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II to expel his Christian subjects from Istanbul as a retaliation for the Christians' attacks on the Andalusian Muslims. However, the Ottoman *Shayk al-Islam* Zambilli Jamali Efendi objected, arguing that this practice was against Islamic law concerning the rights of non-Muslim subjects.<sup>259</sup> In brief, Islam forbids reprisal and the frame of every action in war is defined by Islamic law, which nobody may transgress.

As shown above, Islam insists on the legal rights of the enemy soldier in war, even though it is difficult to maintain a balance in a combat this situation. If the enemy is protected by Islam, the civilian is protected even more stringently. No one may touch an innocent person; no one may be a 'suicide bomber' who rushes into crowds with bombs tied to his or her body; no one may kidnap innocent civilians and behead them, no matter what their religion. Moreover, as it bans attacking civilians in war, Islam considers attacking civilians in peace as the most grievous sin. The Qur'an, as has been mentioned above, equates killing innocent people with unbelief (Furqan, 25:68; An'âm, 6:151). Thus those who attack the lives of innocent people in the name of religion will lose their happiness in this world and salvation in the hereafter. Islam is a true faith and it should be lived truly. As Gülen has pointed out, faith cannot be attained by the use of untrue methods. In Islam, just as a goal must be legitimate, so must all the means employed to reach that goal. From this perspective it is clear that one cannot achieve Heaven by murdering another person.<sup>260</sup> Considering that human life is the most precious thing in Islam, the gravity of the present situation is obvious. Gülen, who openly cursed the terrorists behind the attack of 11 September, calls upon everybody to curse the terrorists who are darkening the bright face of Islam, and to take collective action against them. As an Islamic scholar and an expert in this field, Gülen finds it unacceptable to associate Islam with terrorism. He declares that a Muslim must not be terrorist and a terrorist cannot be a true Muslim.<sup>261</sup> The individuality of a crime is basic principle in Islam; whoever commits a crime is the only person to be called to account. As repeatedly stated in the Qur'an 'no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another' (An'âm, 6:164; Nahl, 16:15; Fâtir, 35:18). Therefore it is not permissible in Islam to issue a *fatwa* allowing a crime against civilians to be carried out. It is obvious that such attacks are indiscriminate except in the sense that civilians rather than military personnel are deliberately targeted. Such indiscriminate attacks are totally incompatible with one of the general principles of Islamic law.<sup>262</sup> The proposition that any action is legitimate in order to achieve an undefined goal is contrary to Islam. The example used by Gülen is

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<sup>259</sup> Bekir Karlığa, *Kültürlerarası Diyalog Sempozyumu*, Erkâm Mat. İst. 1998, 16

<sup>260</sup> Fethullah Gülen, in an interview with the Italian journalist Michele Zanzucchi, 4

<sup>261</sup> Rainer Hermann, Fethullah Gülen Offers Antidote For Terror, *Fethullah Gülen Web Site*, 1

<sup>262</sup> Çapan, *ibid.*, 89

as follows: if there are nine guilty persons and one innocent on a ship, this ship should not be sunk; the innocent should not be sacrificed to punish the guilty majority.<sup>263</sup>

As we stated above, individual cannot declare war; only the state can do so. Today, those who carry out suicide attacks are acting contrary to the principles of their religion, and perpetrating irreligious acts in the name of religion. Gülen insists that Islamic principles should be tested by the consensus of the Muslim community (scholars). This shows his reliance on and trust in Islamic sources and the tradition which has carried these sources and their interpretation from age to age up until today. Thus a few unqualified extremists' *fatwas* approving suicide attacks which are not confirmed by the Muslim community do not represent the view taken by Islam and its true followers. Having summarised the status of suicide attacks in Islam, we will focus on the causes of these activities, their historical background and some solutions in the light of Fethullah Gülen's evaluations.

At the beginning of this paper we noted that Gülen approaches the problem from various angles, considering religious, political, social, psychological and economic dimensions. At this juncture we place great stress on his critical re-evaluation of the approaches to terrorist activities adopted by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Gülen states that both Muslims and non-Muslims are responsible for the instability of the world today. Concerning Muslims, he argues that some thoughtless people who lack the power of discernment narrow the broad scope of Islam. For this reason Gülen suggests that such people must first change the image of Islam in their mind. Because they have no comprehensive understanding of the sources, they take as reference only some sections of the Islamic sources without exploring the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, or the understandings of prominent Muslim scholars. They read these texts literally and mostly out of context without examining what precede or follows them. The results are disastrous: they misinterpret their religion and then put this misunderstood religion into practice; consequently they are misguided and they misguide others. Muslims should, Gülen says, begin to re-evaluate the *fatwas* of the people who say they represent Islam today, because today everybody experiences directly or indirectly the damage of the terror which directly results from this intolerance and misinterpretation. Furthermore, Gülen emphasises the danger of the idea that carrying out terrorist acts under the pretence of 'representing the oppressed nations of the world' against the innocent people of other nations; this notion is by no means compatible with Islam. Terror does harm to Islam, Muslims and humanity at large. In fact Gülen thinks that an Islamic world does not really exist today, as Muslims are divided and scattered throughout the world. Today Muslims are not able to contact one another and constitute a union, or to work together to solve common problems.

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<sup>263</sup> Fethullah Gülen, *İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, (prepared for publication by Faruk Tuncer)İstanbul: Da Yay. 2003, 200

Thus he believes that at the moment Muslims cannot contribute to the world peace effectively.<sup>264</sup> There are a number of ossified problems in the Muslim world and the existence of these problems makes it easy for some evil powers to manipulate the vulnerable. Moreover, the ongoing problems of poverty, the lack of education for the poor, states' inability to unite with their citizens, a deficient understanding of the notion of the social state, a lack of democratic governments which give priority to the rights and freedoms of their citizens, and, most importantly, the neglect of the spiritual and ethical life of the people have led to a deterioration of the general condition of the Muslim world.<sup>265</sup> Besides these factors, some experts say that uneducated youths might be brain-washed or even controlled by drugs to carry out terrorist attacks. All these explanations show clearly that the war waged against the terrorist organisations by police or military forces will not be sufficient to stop them. Gülen has stated that to fight against the ideology of the terrorists we need the arguments of the intellectuals. Gülen also notes that one cannot establish order on the basis of rude power; military measures can only result in disorder and injustice.<sup>266</sup> It is also generally acknowledged that an order achieved by mere force and rude power cannot last long. Gülen expresses his dissatisfaction with the explanation that the reason behind these terrorist activities is religion, and points out that when religion is held to be the source of violence, the major factor and power goes unnoticed.<sup>267</sup>

We will consider now Fethullah Gülen's approach to the problem of overcoming this global calamity of terror. It is important to note that, in contrast to many observers, Gülen, while acknowledging certain negative developments, thinks that the world situation is not deteriorating and there will be no clash of civilisations. According to Gülen, those who are looking forward to a catastrophic future for the world and a clash of civilisations, are evil individuals or groups who are unable to impose their world view on the people and hope that global antagonisms will ensure the continuation of their power in the world.<sup>268</sup> Nonetheless, the global political situation does not look hopeful, and we should not be complacent. Gülen emphasises that education must play a very important role in helping to resolve the world's problems; his experience has thought him that the key problem of our modern civilisation is the education of mankind.<sup>269</sup> Today, many schools and other educational centres established on his advice and initiative both within Turkey and outside Turkey are making very good progress to achieve this aim.

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<sup>264</sup> Fethullah Gülen, 'In True Islam Terror Does not Exist', *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks*, New Jersey: Light Pb 2004, 2-3

<sup>265</sup> Gülen, *İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, 202

<sup>266</sup> Gülen, *Ibid*, 202

<sup>267</sup> Gülen, *ibid*, 202

<sup>268</sup> Aydüz, *ibid.*, 237

<sup>269</sup> M. Enes Ergene, *Geleneğin Modern Çağa Tanıklığı*, İstanbul: Yeni Akademi Yay. 2005, 47

Besides education, another important activity initiated by Gülen in the cause of world peace is 'dialogue meetings.' As Ergene has pointed out, these meetings are an extension of Gülen's global educational activities; they also serve the education of humanity. Although he has been severely criticised by some people, he bravely argues that these dialogue meetings are primarily concerned with religion and are thus a religious duty.<sup>270</sup> Gülen constantly insist on the religious nature of the meetings because the basic Islamic sources advise Muslims to engage in dialogue with other faiths. Thus Gülen says that the dialogue is not his invention or innovation, but a revival of the most neglected aspect of Islam. His constancy in this regard is very sincere: he has said that even if the sensitive political balance of the world changes a thousand times he will never stop the dialogue meetings; the Islamic sources do allow him only to do so.<sup>271</sup> For Gülen, dialogue and tolerance mean accepting every person irrespective of their own status and learning to live together.<sup>272</sup> He is concerned to show that the rights of the religion, life, travel, trade, property, free speech and so on are guaranteed by the Prophetic tradition, the best examples are being the document of Madina and the farewell speech of the Prophet Muhammed. Although there are ten years between these two events, Gülen says, there is no difference between them in their approaches to the rights of non-Muslims (Jews, Christians) and even of unbelievers. For Gülen this indicates clearly the religious imperative to continue the dialogues. Gülen also accepts that due to a lack of dialogue, some mistakes have been made by Muslims in the history of Islam, but Gülen argues that the history of Islam is also full of good examples of dialogue. It is very important to note here that Gülen makes reference to the synthesis of Turkish mysticism and Islam. Anatolian mystics developed their understanding of love on the basis of the motto 'Because we love the Creator we love all His creatures'.<sup>273</sup> This point is surely crucial for the understanding of Gülen's dialogue activities for world peace.

Thus the key word in Gülen's dialogue meetings is love, and this love derives from his understanding of Islam and Sufism practised in Anatolia. Those who seek to profit from chaos, violence and terror will doubtless fail to understand the conception of love in Gülen's philosophy, and will consequently fail to understand Gülen's world view. Philosophically speaking, Gülen, like his predecessor Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, considers love to be the essence of creation: according to Gülen, love is the most essential element, the most bright light, the greatest power in every creature in the world. If one is grounded in love, every kind of difficulty in the world can be overcome.<sup>274</sup> Thus Gülen introduces love as an

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<sup>270</sup> [www.herkul.org](http://www.herkul.org)

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<sup>272</sup> [www.herkul.org](http://www.herkul.org)

<sup>273</sup> Ergene, *ibid.*, 17

<sup>274</sup> Gülen, *İnsanın Özündeki Sevgi*, 17

unquestionable condition for being human. Without love, it is almost impossible to create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and tolerance. Gülen's love is not an empty conceptualisation; it is directly related to his religion, whose commandments he sensitively tries to put into practice. Gülen says that religion commands love and peace; love makes people truly human and the spirits of the true will rise to Heaven.<sup>275</sup> Clearly, then, love lights the fuse of dialogue and global tolerance; it paves the way to global peace. For Gülen, man can only communicate actively with all humans and other creatures through love, which leads him to help others.<sup>276</sup> Unlike ideologies based on social Darwinism, which suggest that only the powerful are fit to live and the weak should not survive, Gülen, as a Muslim scholar, holds that love derived from Islam has a great capacity to embrace every person in the world irrespective of their beliefs. Relying on his own conviction and tradition, and on the global transmitters of love such as Abu Hanifa, Ahmad Yasawi, Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, Imam Ghazali, and Imam Rabbani, Gülen describes love and tolerance as 'the roses and flowers of our hill'.<sup>277</sup> But this love must be expressed its practical and living dimension, and so Gülen has organised many meetings, in which different people with different religious and cultural background come together to discuss the common problems of humanity. The participants of these meetings have initiated various projects and offered many solutions to ameliorate the chaotic situation in our world. Most importantly, these meetings show the people that dialogue is the real remedy for terror, chaos, and intolerance. Gülen, as a sincere believer in the importance of dialogue, has asked his close friends not to name this unfinished process of dialogue (emphasise that this process is a long way from completion). This also shows his optimistic view of the future.

We have tried to show that Islam and terror are radically opposed concepts, even though some manipulative, uneducated or deceived individuals commit terrorist crimes in the name of religion. We have also drawn attention to the mistaken association of *jihad* with war. We then pointed out that Islam considers killing innocent people in the name of religion to be the greatest sin, and has never legitimised suicide. Next, we focused on Gülen's emphasis on the importance of dialogue in our World. Despite the ravages of terrorist activities and many wars, Gülen's strong and sincere call for dialogue increases our hope that peace may be achieved. Love is situated in the heart of his understanding of dialogue, and this love mainly nurtured by his faith in Islam and his mystical understanding of religion. Ali, the cousin of the Prophet, declared that he saw Muslims as his religious fellows and non-Muslims as his fellows in creation; Gülen agrees. This love necessitates dialogue not only with human beings but

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<sup>275</sup> Gülen, *ibid.*, 17

<sup>276</sup> Gülen, *ibid.*, 47

<sup>277</sup> Gülen, *ibid.*, 78

also with all creatures. When humankind realises this dialogue, God's consent will be achieved. This is, according to Gülen, the purpose of man's existence in the world.