

# Selective Quoting and Perception Engineering: A Critique “Fethullah Gülen” Report by Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs

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## ABSTRACT

**Diyanet** (Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs) under the chairmanship of Dr. Mehmet Görmez, published a report on Fethullah Gülen titled "Feton in His Own Words: Organized Abuse of Religion" in 2017. Then, on 8 December 2020 Dr. Görmez in an interview with him, emphasized very seriously that it is wrong to break a person's words from the integrity, to change and dedicate him. In this study, Görmez's discourse was compared with the method he followed in his report on Gülen.

**Keywords:** Fethullah Gülen, Hizmet Movement, Diyanet, Mehmet Görmez, takfir (excommunication), tadril (accusation of heresy)

Turkey was established as a secular state in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The new regime came with sweeping authoritative and suppressive social and political reforms which ended the caliphate, changed the dress code and the alphabet, and banned religion from the public sphere in an effort to curb Islam’s influence over the nation. One major tool the regime used to move forward in this direction was to introduce Diyanet (Turkey’s Directorate of Religious Affairs) in 1924 as a governmental authority to control micromanage all religious affairs in the country single-handedly. Having fulfilled its mission in the fullest since its inception, Diyanet has been financially and politically reinforced under the Erdogan regime which has been instrumentalizing it to silence critics with religious rhetoric. In recent years, Diyanet has been at the forefront of Erdogan’s crackdown on the Hizmet movement and has released reports and sermons in which Fethullah Gülen and his followers are being accused of heresy based on cherry-picked quotes from the former’s sermons and books. These reports were prepared mainly under the watch of the former President of Diyanet, Dr. Mehmet Görmez.

Interestingly, in a recent interview Görmez has made an important statement on takfir of a Muslim (excommunication), and tadril (accusing with heresy), by referring to the debates around Dr. Mustafa Ozturk who has been in the spotlight for his comments on the nature of the Qur’an.

In the interview, Prof. Görmez stated that it is not acceptable to quote people selectively and take their words and opinions out of context. Görmez said he does not agree with Dr. Ozturk’s claim<sup>1</sup> that Qur’an is not the word of God; however, he added that Ahl al-Sunnah need to consider Dr. Ozturk under the domain of Ahl al-Qibla and the lambasting and excommunication he was subjected to was wrong. Dr. Görmez’s sensitive approach should be commended when he states that a Muslim’s views should be judged according to the standards

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTW8J0ynu-A>

of Ahl al-Sunnah and that they should not be quoted selectively without giving the proper context.

In this article, we will try to evaluate the extent to which Diyanet's team, headed by Görmez, adhered to the aforementioned principle of Ahl al-Sunnah in their report on Fethullah Gülen.

### **Questioning Selective Quoting**

In order to better understand the subject, it will be helpful to quote Prof. Görmez's statements verbatim. He starts off by saying, "We have to question the manner in which it was brought to public attention. This manipulative and selective quoting should be questioned as parts of his speech delivered a year-and-a-half ago were taken out of context and made public now."<sup>2</sup>

"This is not just about Dr. Mustafa; it happened to many of us too in the past year. Certain parts have been skillfully selected and excerpted out of the speeches of the people who gave religious talks. As I just said, it was to deepen the rift between people and to harm the brotherhood bonds that unite us. I cannot think of another explanation. I mean, why was that part selected?"<sup>3</sup>

Görmez emphasized this again later in his speech and said, "I repeat! It is wrong to selectively take out one part and put it out in the public domain – firstly, I did not agree with it. Secondly, the (verbal) lynching that followed is not right."<sup>4</sup>

We will try to apply Görmez's broad framework to the report about Fethullah Gülen titled "Feto in His Own Words: Organised Abuse of Religion", written during Görmez's term at the Diyanet, and examine whether the report measures up to his methodological and moral standards.

In the preamble that Görmez wrote for the said report, he indicated that the report has been produced by examining 80 of Gülen's books (in Turkish) and his audio and video talks of 40 thousand minutes (approx. 670 hours). He then came to the following conclusion: "The findings of the Religious Affairs Higher Council's study have been interpreted within the framework of Islam's main epistemological sources. As a result of this study, many wrong beliefs and deviation that do not conform to Islamic creed (*al-'aqīdah*), worship and ethics have been observed."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_6ufoYKjRM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_6ufoYKjRM), 47:35 – 48:17

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_6ufoYKjRM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_6ufoYKjRM), 48:18 – 49:03

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_6ufoYKjRM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_6ufoYKjRM), 54:04 – 54:18

<sup>5</sup> Presidency of Religious Affairs, (2017) "Fetö" By His Own Language: An Organized Abuse of Religion, General Directorate of Religious Affairs Publications, Ankara, p.8.

Let us now look at the methodology employed in the report and attempt to evaluate it through an example. They quoted the following words from a sermon Gülen delivered on November 26, 1989: “A believer enters into the atmosphere of the reverence and affection of the One that is meant to be revered and exalted from the moment they enter a mosque. That gathering is such that on the pulpit of that gathering is Allah Who looks, sees, hears and intimately knows all about us (Who is knowledgeable about our state and condition). And if there is one person who walks between your rows and among you and provided he is given permission from above, who is present in all gatherings about him to bestow honor and blessings onto the gathering, it is Muhammad Mustafa (saw). I consider phrases like “I remind you”, “I call upon you”, “I invite you” presumptuous; so, I request you to be mindful of what you are blessed with in the mosque. I am of the belief that your hearts are able to appreciate this much more deeply than my comprehension and understanding. For that reason, even if a scholar, a president or a prime minister enters the mosque, we know that there is the presence of Allah who gazes at our hearts 70 times in a second. And also, there is the presence of Muhammad Mustafa (saw) who looks in His eyes and observes His perfect beauty.”<sup>6</sup>

In the Diyanet’s Report, the following conclusions are drawn based on the above excerpt.

a. “To claim that Allah is on the pulpit where Gülen is speaking from, means he attributes physical location to Allah. Since Allah is beyond the physical realm, uttering words that attribute physical location to Him is against Islamic belief.” “He carelessly uttered these words which are against the fundamentals of Islamic belief and risks one’s faith in order to influence masses by placing Allah on the pulpit”. (Allah forbid)

b. “Saying that Prophet Muhammad looks in Allah’s eyes is reminiscent of “*mujassimah*” which ascribe physical attributes to Allah and of “*mushabbihah*”, who liken Allah to the creation (anthropomorphism). Furthermore, it is claimed that Gülen carelessly utters discourses of the astray groups in order to influence the congregation. The report claims that his Islamic knowledge and sensitivity are deficient and he abuses sacred values including matters of faith. (pp. 14-15)

Let us try to assess Diyanet’s attempt to engineer perception by selectively quoting Gülen:

**1. Since Görmez believes that "judgment should not be passed by selectively quoting and by excerpting from a speech" the above excerpts of Gülen's sermons should have been assessed within their original context.** Let us now look at what Gülen said before the quoted parts in order to understand the context. In the section preceding the quoted part, Gülen says: “These mosques, together with their original one [referring to Ka’ba], have been built in the name of Allah. These have been built so that Allah is remembered and exalted in them.” (7:20-8:12). With these words he, like many other preachers, reminds the congregation that they should act with the consciousness that they are before Allah when they enter a mosque.

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<sup>6</sup> Video Sermon - Hisar 1, *Kutsilerin Takvası*, dk. 10:40-12:00. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTotae89nAA>)

He uses metaphors to remind attendees that Allah sees them and they should pray as if they see Him and be mindful of Him. Praying with Ihsān consciousness (*kayfiyat-al Ihsān*) is emphasized in a hadith known as Jibrīl Hadith and it points to one of the major objectives in Islam. In this hadith, religion is positioned upon a tripartite foundation of īmān (faith), Islam and ihsān. In explaining what ihsān is, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said “performing your ibadah (worship) as if you see Allah, although you don’t see Him, He sees you”.<sup>7</sup> Relaying such an important and intrinsic notion to the congregation by utilising the tools of literature within permissible criteria is an important practice. One of the most effective ways of expression is to use metaphors. As there are metaphoric expressions in all languages, in the Qur’an and Sunnah too (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad) there are numerous examples of metaphors. Therefore, as a preacher, it is perfectly normal and expected that Gülen as a powerful orator, makes use of such strategies to convey his messages and explain concepts.

**2. There are many metaphorical expressions in the Qur’an and the Sunnah.** For example, when talking about how Allah saved Prophet Moses from the Pharaoh, the following metaphor is used: “...*And I spread My love over you in order that you might be brought up under My eyes.*” (20:39). A representative metaphor and a specific literary style have been used in the verse in order to refer to protection. One who is protected is kept in one’s sight and is bestowed upon with gifts and benevolence.

The *mufassirs* (scholars of Qur’anic interpretation) pointed out that the expression in the verse “that you might be reared in My sight is a metaphor referring to “knowledge, protection and safekeeping” hence to the special care and observance given to Moses.<sup>8</sup>

Allah’s expression ‘*you are under Our Eyes*’ (Ta Ha 20:39, Tur 52:48, Qamar 54:14) has not been taken literally by the scholars who rather interpreted it to mean ‘you are in Our protection, care and safety’.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, where the Qur’an says, “*Wherever you are, Allah is with you*” in verses such as Hadīd, (57:4) and Tawbah (9:40) does not refer to physical presence. This is a metaphorical way of expressing that wherever a person is, his/her condition is always known to Allah at all times. It also refers to the fact that Allah’s knowledge encompasses everything and that no one is beyond Allah’s divine knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bukhārī, *īmān* 37, tafsīr sūrah (31) 2; Muslim, *īmān* 1, 5, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Fakhr al-din al-Rāzī, (1999) *Maḥāṣin al-ghayb*, Dāru Ihyā al-turāth al-‘Arabī, Bayrūt, 22/48; al-Māwardī, ‘Alī ibn Muhammad, *al-Nukat wa al-‘uyūn*, Dār al-kubut al-‘ilmiyyah, Bayrūt, Lubnān, 3/402; al-Nasafī, Abū al-Barakāt, (1998) *Madārik al-tanzīl wa haqā’iq al-ta’wīl*, Dār al-kalim al-tayyib, Bayrūt, 2/464.

<sup>9</sup> al-Zamakhsharī, Mahmūd ibn ‘Umar, (1998) *al-Kashshāf ‘an haqā’iq ghawāmiḥ al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, Maktabat ‘Ubaykān, Riyad, 4/81-82; al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṣin al-ghayb*, 14/386; al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-‘uyūn*, 5/387; Elmalılı, Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili*, Eser Yay. Yayınları, p. 4566; Ibn Ashur Tāhir, (1984) *al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*, Dār al-Tunūsiyyah, Tūnis, 16/219.

<sup>10</sup> Abū al-Su‘ūd, Muhammad ibn Muhammad, *Irshād aql al-salīm ilā mazāyā al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, Dār Ihyā turāth al-‘Arabī, Bayrūt, 8/204.

If we were to apply the methodology adopted in Diyanet's Report to the first example above, the following conclusion would have to be drawn: (Allah forbid!) Allah is likened to a person who lived in Pharaoh's palace since He sees Moses at all times. As a result, physical location is attributed to Allah. Therefore, one would have to conclude that, since Allah cannot be likened to anything and no physical location can be attributed to Him, these verses would pose a challenge from an Islamic perspective and they would have to be rejected.

In ahadith too, Allah's protection and benevolence are explained through metaphors. For example, Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) said to Abdullah ibn Abbas "*Oh son, you protect Allah so that He protects you. If you protect Allah, you will find him before you*".<sup>11</sup>

This hadith is regarded as one of the most concise and eloquent examples of metaphor. Since Allah is free from time, space and direction, the metaphorical expression in this hadith means the following: If you observe Allah's commands, refrain from what He forbids and fulfil and do not neglect His rights, in return, He will keep you safe and take you in His protection, both in this life and in the hereafter. As a result, wherever you are, you will have His shelter and protection with you.<sup>12</sup>

Once again, if the methodology adopted in the report was to be applied to this hadith, they would have to say the following: (Allah forbid) The Prophet (*saw*) is speaking about Allah as if He is a weak man in need of shelter and protection and asks Abdullah ibn Abbas to protect Him. They would then quote verses from the Qur'an, which point out that Allah is all powerful and He can make things happen by just saying "be". Hence, they would rule (Allah forbid) that the expressions in the hadith are clear deviations and heresy. Consequently, they would have to claim that (Allah forbid) Prophet is infusing his hadith with beliefs about Allah that are inconceivable and unacceptable.

**3. Taking literal meanings of metaphors and allegorical expressions and deriving conclusions from them have been a cause for deviation and heresy.** The scholars of *Kalām*, who studied the articles of Islamic faith pointed out that metaphorical and allegorical expressions in the Qur'an and Sunnah have been included in order to assist people in understanding higher truths and cautioned against taking their literal meanings as it may lead to heresy.<sup>13</sup>

**4. In Diyanet's own publications, the importance of metaphorical expressions has been emphasized.** More specifically, during Görmez's presidency at Diyanet, a council of scholars headed personally by him, produced a publication titled "Islam through the Ahadith". In this book they emphasized the importance of having a certain level of command over

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<sup>11</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Qiyāmah*, 59; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* 1, 307.

<sup>12</sup> Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī, 2003, *Qūt al-muḡthadhī 'alā Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā, Makkah, 2/604; 'Aliyy al-Qārī, 2002, *Mirqāt al-mafātīh sharh Mishkāt al-masābīh*, Dār al-Fikr, Bayrūt, 8/3323.

<sup>13</sup> al-Taftāzānī Sa'd al-Dīn, (1981), *Sharh al-maqāsīd*, Dar al-ma'ārif al-Nu'māniyyah, Pakistan, 2/110; al-Ījī Abd al-Rahmān, (1997), *al-Mawāqif*, Dāru'l-jīyl, Lūbnan, 3/153; *al-Sharh al-kabīr 'alā 'aqīdat al-Tahāwiyyah*, Dāru'z-zehāir Dār al-Zahāir, Lubnān, 1/345.

language in order to properly comprehend the Hadith and it is also stated that Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) also made use of metaphorical expressions. Here are their exact words: “When calling people to Islam, Prophet (*saw*) made use of literary characteristics of Arabic language. While on the one hand, using certain direct and literal expressions in spreading basic truths of Islam, he (*saw*) also made use of metaphors, similes, figures of speech and allegories. Sometimes, he relayed the fundamentals of belief through living examples and at other times, he used stories and parables as it is done in all languages and traditions in order to instil them in people’s minds. In addition, it is a fact that concretization is used in all languages in order to transmit abstract phenomena. Concretization is a form of idiom in order to strengthen the power of an expression. It is about expressing abstract phenomena, thoughts and feelings that are hard to express through concrete concepts. Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) made use of such methods when explaining certain truths that are beyond people’s imagination and comprehension.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, in Diyanet’s book, they studied the relevant ahadith with this perspective. We can cite an example:

*“Allah said: ‘Whosoever shows enmity to a wali (friend) of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And nothing brings my servant closer to Me more than the obligatory acts (fard). And My servant continues to draw near to me with nawāfil (optional) prayers until I bestow my Love unto him. When I Love him, I am his ear with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge.’”<sup>15</sup> This hadith describes the heights a believer can reach when he deepens his relationship with His Lord (*Rabb*). At such a level, it is as if the curtains separating the servant and his *Rabb* are removed. The servant whom Allah refers as His walī (friend) and gives His divine love, approaches all things and the universe from the perspective of maqāsid (divine intentions). In addition, when Allah says “When I love him, I am his ear with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks”, He figuratively means that He becomes close to His servant who is bestowed with His love.<sup>16</sup>*

As it is expressed in the underlined sentence, Diyanet admitted that it is a figurative and metaphorical expression and the hadith has been interpreted accordingly.

Furthermore, in the Diyanet’s Encyclopedia of Islam’s entry on anthropomorphism, it is emphasised that it is deviation and disbelief to interpret the metaphorical and allegorical

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<sup>14</sup> Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Religious Affairs Directorate), (2014) *Hadislerle İslam*, Dini Yayınlar, Ankara, 1/105.

<sup>15</sup> Bukhārī, riqaq 38.

<sup>16</sup> Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, *Hadislerle İslam*, 1/461-462.

expressions in the Qur'an and Hadith literally without recognizing the relationship between the metaphors and the truth that they refer to.

While many scholars as well as the Diyanet's own publications admit that many metaphors and allegories are used in the Qur'an and the Sunnah because such characteristics are representative of the richness of language, to conceal what Gülen means in similar expressions and label them as heresy is perception engineering and a double standard which is an offence from an Islamic perspective.

**5. With regard to anthropomorphism, Gülen's position is the same as that of the Ahlu's Sunnah Ulama as he believes that attributing body parts to Allah such as hand, foot and eye is heresy:** "The earliest scholars of Islam, who followed the way of the Prophet and his Companions very closely, acted in self-possession and with great care concerning the Figurative Attributes, in the same way they did with the subtle, very meaningful statements of the Qur'an. They admitted them to be among God's Attributes and preferred referring their true meanings to God Almighty. Unlike these scholars of the *Ahlu's-Sunna wa'l-Jama'a*, the followers of certain misguided sects, such as the Anthropomorphists (*Mujassima*) and the Comparers (*mushabbihah*), asserted that God Almighty had a body and compared Him to the created, respectively; this was partly in order not to deny these Attributes, and thus the Divine Being was conceived as One Who, like human beings, has hands, feet, eyes, and ears, and Who descends, ascends, runs, gets near, becomes rejoiced, and smiles, etc. As a result, they fell into mental misguidance."<sup>17</sup>

Those who claim to have written this report by analysing all of Gülen's books should have seen that he holds the same position as the Ahl al-Sunnah ulama regarding *mujassimah* and *mushabbihah*. Sadly, they did the opposite and did not shy away from accusing Gülen of anthropomorphism. This cannot be justified, neither with scientific rigour nor with purity of intention.

**6. Gülen, in his numerous works has made it clear that Allah is free from, and not bound by, time and space.** For example: "God is absolutely free of all time and space constraints, and that His relationship with the believer occurs on the 'slopes' of the believer's heart."<sup>18</sup>

Here is another example: "The existence is never He; whatever there is—substance or accident, attribute or characteristic—is from Him and subsists by His being the Self-Subsistent by Whom all subsist. That everything is from Him and subsists by Him can never mean that

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<sup>17</sup> Gülen, Fethullah, (2011), *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, (Translated by Ali Unal) Tughra books, New Jersey, 4/152.

<sup>18</sup> Gülen, F., (2011a), *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, 1/20; Gülen, (2016b) *The Opening: Al-Fatiha*, Tughra Books, New Jersey, p. 50.

there is a continuance or contiguity between the Divine Being and the contingent existence or that the latter is a place for the existence of the Former.<sup>19</sup>

Gülen further clarifies his position by often quoting the verses below by Ibrahim Haqqi Erzurumi which declare that Allah is free from *tajassum*, *tashabbuh* (anthropomorphism), time and space:

*There is no opposite, nor peer, of my Lord in the universe;  
He is the All-Transcendent and exempt from having a form.  
He has no partners and He is free from begetting and  
being begotten; He is Unique, having no equals—  
these He mentions in Sūrat al-Ikhlās.  
He is neither a body nor a substance,  
nor is He an accident nor of matter.  
He does not eat and drink, nor is He contained by time.  
He is absolutely free from change, alteration, and  
transformation, and from colors and having a shape as well—  
These are His Attributes in the negative.  
He is neither in the heavens nor on the earth;  
neither on the right nor on the left; neither before nor after;  
He is absolutely free from any direction.  
So He is never contained in space.<sup>20</sup>*

As it is clear here, in the report of the Diyanet, Gülen's assertions where he denounces anthropomorphism and affirms that Allah is free from time and space have been completely ignored and he is quoted selectively to engineer a specific perception. What the report did is to accuse him on a point on which his stance is absolutely clear as he is very cautious and sensitive in exaltation of Allah and denunciation of all kinds of comparisons and ascription of non-divine attributes.

**7. Many Muslim scholars have expressed their support for Fethullah Gülen's ideas and affirmed that his approach to belief, activism and service are in conformity with Ahl al-Sunnah and his views have been the subject of a number of studies.** I believe the following examples will suffice in this regard.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad 'Imārah, who is one of the most significant Ulama in the Muslim world today, made the following remarks about Gülen: "Ustadh Fethullah Gülen is one of the

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<sup>19</sup> Gülen, F., *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, 4/122; Also available at <https://fGülen.com/en/fethullah-Gülens-works/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/gods-attributes-of-glory>.

<sup>20</sup> Gülen, (2011a), *Emerald Hills of the Heart*, 4/66; Gülen, (2012b), *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler*, Nil yay., İzmir, 1/40; Gülen, (2012b), *Kendi İklimimiz*, Nil yay., İzmir, s. 155; Gülen, (2014c), *Bir İ'caz Hecelemesi*, Nil yay., İzmir, s. 365; Gülen, *İkindi Yağmurları*, Nil yay., İzmir, s. 335; Gülen, (2015d), *Sohbet Atmosferi*, Nil yay., İzmir, s. 236; Gülen, *Ümit ve Korku*, Hisar Camii, İzmir 22 Temmuz, 1990. (15.06- 15.34; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhP8bE6Ipug>; <http://www.herkul.org/bamtelilelest-bezmi-ahde-vefa-ve-hak-la-munasebet/>.



best fruits of an Islamic Civilisation that reconciles the wisdom of the mind and the *basirah* (foresight) of the heart. The Qur'an is the guide that shapes his thought and life."<sup>21</sup>

A similar view is expressed by late Prof. Dr. Saīd Ramadān al-Būtī who is one of the distinguished Muslim scholars of our time: "Ustadh Fethullah Gülen is a scholar in the line of Said Nursi. I appreciate and congratulate him for his services to Islam."<sup>22</sup>

Many among the Ulama also commented on the accusations against Gülen in Diyanet's Report:

Prof. Dr. Fathī al-Hijāzī (Al-Azhar University, Egypt):

That Ustadh Fethullah Gülen is being subjected to such distortion and defamation that Hizmet movement is declared as al-firqah al-dāllah (a deviant sect) proves to us that Gülen is walking in the steps of the Prophets (*saw*). Because one of the most obvious characteristics of the Prophets is the fact that they were subjected to oppression and persecution while spreading the values they believed in. Turkey's Diyanet's accusations of deviation against Gülen contain neither any truth nor are they based on any proof.<sup>23</sup>

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Ali Rabi' (Al-Azhar University, Egypt):

Gülen's thoughts have been based on the Book (Qur'an) and the Sunnah from the outset. Gülen has adopted the Book and the Sunnah as his guide, did not deviate from that line under any circumstances and he maintained his moderation without being marginalised. When we heard about Hizmet movement being declared a deviant sect, we said 'this is a lie'. "... What a terrible claim that comes out of their mouths! They say nothing but lies". (Al-Kahf, 18:5).

Prof. Rabi's testimony about Gülen is significant in establishing the truth. It is a historical misfortune to witness an institution like Diyanet, which has served people for so long, being lowered to such a deplorable level by its officials.

Prof. Dr. Abd al-Majīd Būshabka (Shu'ayb al-Dukālī University, Morocco) said "Those who attack Hizmet are surely those who never read Ustadh Fethullah's books and they do not know him." He pointed out that those who wrote the report either really never read the books or intentionally ignored the facts despite having seen them.<sup>24</sup>

Prof Ali Gomaa (former Grand Mufti of Egypt) offered the broadest evaluation. He made the following remarks about the report written under the leadership of Prof. Görmez: "Head of Diyanet has misled and fooled people with his words. I say to Diyanet: 'Read Fethullah Gülen's books again. Where are those baseless accusations you make? These are nothing but

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<sup>21</sup> <https://hiragate.com/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmbFf-gYjyU>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGKIIb3uC-0>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1m2ZIRVaYbs>

fabrications. What these people did is just confuse and mislead people with lies. I have read their meeting resolutions. As an Arab proverb goes: 'He placed his own disgrace on me, and left'. This proverb highlights how far they are from the truth. May Allah protect us from descending to such a state."<sup>25</sup>

At this point it is apt to remind the reader that Fethullah Gülen's thought and activism have been and still are the subject of many academic studies. As much as we could establish, these include approximately twenty master's and doctoral studies in the leading academic institutions of the Islamic world.<sup>26</sup> We believe it will be helpful to briefly refer to three of these doctoral theses.

1. Amal Abdullah Muhammad al-Nu'aymāt (2014). *Fethullah Gülen's works on aqīdah and akhlaq (morality)*. An Analytical study. (Jāmi'at al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah al-'Alamiyyah, Kulliyat al-Dirāsāt al-'ulyā, Qism al-'aqīdah wa al-falsafat al-Islāmiyyah, Jordan.) In this study, en-Nuaymat conducted a comparative study of Gülen's views on Islam's belief and *akhlaq* (morality) perspectives with other Muslim scholars and described Gülen as "a scholar who adheres to Ahl al-Sunnah al-'aqīdah and Māturīdī school and as one who makes tajdīd in belief, *akhlaaq* and tablīgh (call to Islam).

2. Nūsah al-Sayyid Mahmūd al-Saīd, (2018). *Fethullah's Gülen's views in Kalām and philosophy*. Al-Azhar University Egypt. Nuse carried out a comparative study of Gülen's views on *ilahiyyat*, *sam'iyyat* and *nubuwwah* (divinity, prophethood and transmitted sources) with the views of other Muslim scholars. He concluded that Gülen adopts the Ahl al-Sunnah perspective on the matters of *al-'aqīdah* and presents them with scientific and logical perspectives to appeal to the listener's heart, mind and soul with a new methodology in a way people of our time demand.

3. Lutfī ibn 'Abid al-Ansārī, (2019) *Hizmet Movement on al-'aqīdah and thought (an analytical study)*. Umm al-Qura University, Mecca. This doctoral study has been recognised for its outstanding quality of academic work. 'Abid al-Ansārī in this study, emphasised that Gülen approaches his subject material with the Ahl al-Sunnah's broad and comprehensive outlook from the perspective of justice, mercy, fairness, respect for the Word of Allah and Sunnah of the Prophet (*saw*), uniting around the truth and refraining from separation and disunity.

As indicated above it is possible to cite more examples like these. The fair and unbiased views of the respected scholars in their field should be given due importance.

In addition to all of these discussions, Fethullah Gülen is well recognized by the Diyanet community, including Prof. Görmez, as an imam, orator, preacher, thinker, and a person of active service. For many years, Gülen served in different provinces as an official preacher of Diyanet and tens of thousands of people attended his sermons at the largest mosques of Turkey. Gülen was chosen a number of times for some important assignments under Diyanet. For

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygjHZggJ6Uc&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://nesemat.com>.

instance, in 1968 Diyanet started assigning staff during the Hajj season to help pilgrims and attend their spiritual needs. Gülen was among the first three persons chosen for this duty – the other two were provincial muftis. Lutfi Dogan, the President of Diyanet at the time, called Gülen directly to inform him about this assignment. Gülen was also assigned by Diyanet to deliver sermons and lectures in different cities of Germany in December 1977.

Gülen’s sermons, talks and books have been among some of the best known and most listened to and read in Turkey. In other words, Gülen was one of the Islamic scholars best known to the public. It is important to note that for close to half a century, Diyanet had not raised any concern whatsoever about any content of the talks and writings of Gülen being against the spirit of Islam. Moreover, the prominent leadership of Diyanet, including Prof. Görmez, have attended many conferences and symposia pioneered by Gülen and his associates, including “Qur’an and Science”<sup>27</sup>, “Prophetic Path”<sup>28</sup>, and “Common Roadmap, Ijma and Collective Consciousness”<sup>29</sup>. In these events, Görmez, as the head of Diyanet, expressed appreciation and support for Gülen and the Hizmet movement.<sup>30</sup>

Based on all the evidence explained above, it is hard to reconcile with fairness and common sense the accusations of heresy Görmez and the Diyanet attempt to bring against Gülen, who Görmez and the Diyanet have known for a very long time, appreciated his faith, views, and services, and until recently, they had never found anything in his approach that contradicts the spirit of Islam.

In this article, we tried to posit that the method used in the report written about Fethullah Gülen under Görmez’s watch by selectively quoting Gülen’s words out of context, is scientifically unacceptable and constitutes a double standard. In addition, we pointed out that he – although indirectly – had to admit that the methodology they used was intrinsically biased and unfair. Görmez made the following claim in order to conceal their bias and selective quoting strategy: “Another important point draws attention in the texts and speeches [of Gülen] is that certain approaches and discourse are infused into the seemingly normal narrative in a sinister manner (Diyanet Report, p. 8). Even from a hermeneutics of suspicion approach, such commentary would be found to be far-fetched and rejected.

In conclusion, our aim in this paper is to demonstrate how the Diyanet report on Gülen, which was ordered to be prepared and launched by Prof. Görmez himself, was based on a misguided method, represented a double standard, and was compiled through multiple examples of selective quoting. Görmez himself confessed – indirectly with the case of Prof. Ozturk as explained above – that the method they used was wrong. Gülen’s figurative

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xiu12t>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.haberler.com/sosyal-problemlerle-peygamber-yolundan-cozumler-3593888-haberi/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.izlesene.com/video/islam-dunyasi-ortak-yol-haritasi-icma-ve-kolektif-suur-sempozyumunda-bulustu/7823564>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.izlesene.com/video/islam-dunyasi-ortak-yol-haritasi-icma-ve-kolektif-suur-sempozyumunda-bulustu/7823564>

expressions have been taken out of context in order to smear him with allegations of heresy while consistently ignoring his explicit statements denouncing anthropomorphism and his clear position that Allah is free from time and space. They have also ignored the existence of the metaphorical expressions in the Qur'an and Sunnah as well as the views and warnings of the scholars of tafsīr and hadith that these metaphorical expressions should not be taken literally. Furthermore, even the same approaches in Diyanet's own publications have also been ignored.

The views and judgments of some of the most significant Muslim scholars about Gülen's beliefs, thoughts and understanding of servant activism, as well as academic works that concluded that his *al-'aqīdah* is of the Ahl al-Sunnah, have not been taken into perspective at all. Therefore, it should be stated that this so-called report is a product of an extreme example of framing technique to manipulate people against Gulen. With such a method used in this report, not a single person can escape being labeled an unbeliever.