



SELAM ('Hi' or 'We Come in Peace')

Autumn
Season
2013

Release: 2013

Cert (UK): PG

Language: Turkish with English sub-titles

Runtime: 108 mins

Director: Levent Dimirkale

Screenwriter: Necati Sahin

Cast: Burcin Abdullah, Yunus Emre Yildirim, Hasan Nihat Sutcu

Review (*Today's Zaman*)

The thing that stands out the most about the film is that it is made as a labor of love and with some very good intentions. This is the story of three very pious teachers who have been appointed to teach at Turkish speaking schools in three different countries. The stories of the three teachers move in parallel as they interact with the troubled students around them. However, despite its large production capacities and its most important message of peace and understanding, I do have a problem with the film's reductionisms and its simplification of characters who live in conflict areas, for once again we come to the muddy waters of the harsh differentiation between black and white, love and hate. The film endeavors to relay some very important humanistic values: that solving human conflicts can only be achieved through mutual dialogue and the will to listen. And, of course, the initiation of this dialogue comes with the deliverance of "Selam," which can be summed up with the words: "We come in peace."

Context (*from: Wikipedia*)

The **Gülen movement** is a transnational religious and social movement led by Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen. The movement has attracted supporters and critics in Turkey, Central Asia and increasingly in other parts of the World. The movement is active in education (with private schools in over 140 countries) and interfaith dialogue; and has substantial investments in media, finance, and for-profit health clinics. The movement has been described as a "pacifist, modern-minded Islam, often praised as a contrast to more extreme Salafism. The movement has no official name but it is usually called simply as *Hizmet* (The Service) by its followers and is known euphemistically as *Cemaat* (The Community / Assembly) to the broader public in Turkey.

The movement, according to researchers, has three coordinated tiers: businessmen, journalists, and teachers. The first tier, the so-called Anatolian bourgeoisie, provides financial support: it funds private high schools, universities, colleges, dormitories, summer camps, and foundations around the world. The journalists of the second tier own one of the leading Turkish dailies, *Zaman*; its English-language counterpart, *Today's Zaman* (which is often not a faithful translation); the Turkish television station *Samanyolu TV* (STV); the *Cihan News Agency*; many magazines and academic journals; several lesser dailies and TV channels; and many Internet-only news outlets. Finally, teachers operate the schools.

In 2009 *Newsweek* claimed that movement participants run "schools in which more than 2 million students receive education, many with full scholarships. Estimates of the number of schools and educational institutions vary widely, from about 300 schools in Turkey to over 1,000 schools worldwide. The greatest majority of the teachers are drawn from members of the Gülen network, who often encourage students in the direction of greater piety. The movement is sometimes accused of being "missionary" in intent, or of organizing in a clandestine way and aiming for political power. The establishment of Gülen schools in Western countries, particularly Holland and the USA has sometimes been controversial.