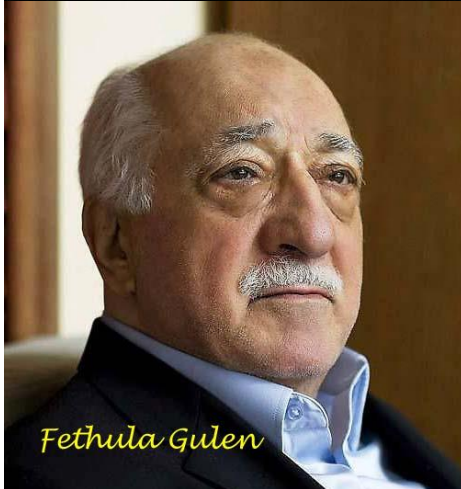


## Visit of Nizamiye mosque on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

By **Christophe Boyer, M.Afr**



*Fethula Gulen*

As I do every year, I went to greet some Muslims during the Ramadan carrying with me [a printed letter of good wishes](#) written by the Pontifical Congregation for Interreligious Dialogue. That afternoon, I went with George Okwii, M.Afr, to visit the [Nizamiye mosque](#) that is probably the most welcoming mosque of Gauteng. It belongs to [Turquoise Harmony Institute](#) of famous [Fethula Gulen](#) accused recently of being the mastermind of a coup d'état in Turkey. Some compare him to Trotsky whereas Erdogan is compared with Stalin.

We arrived during a prayer. A young guide called Ali took care of us once the prayer was finished. Ali is from Soweto whose parents could not afford to pay for his studies. So he did his primary and secondary studies in the boarding school of Nizamiye. It follows the curriculum of South Africa while its pupils also memorise the Koran in two or three years. After learning all the rituals of Islam, Ali will be able to become an imam though he is following some courses at the university and act as a guide at the mosque.

He received us in a beautiful reception hall made in Ottoman style. He showed us the small museum of the mosque where one can see beautiful pictures about Islam. One of them is a chilly letter from Prophet Mohamed asking some people to convert to Islam or else to be killed! Surely it was as self-defence in an age where interreligious dialogue was unknown. We then proceeded to the courtyard where one can see the lay out of the boarding school upstairs. We entered the mosque where an imam was reciting the Koran to a group of teenagers. The size of the building is about two third of the model in Turkey. Most materials were imported from that country even the builders and the craftsmen.



*Ali Katircioglu*

Then we went to greet [Ali Katircioglu](#), the founder of that mosque. The dialogue was a bit slow since Katircioglu communicates only in Turkish. Our guide Ali went to Turkey to learn that language but he is not yet fluent. We offered him the printed letter of good wishes from Rome written in English. His assistants translated it for him.

We were invited to stay for the breaking of the fast. At ground level, there was a meeting for the Directors of the complex (mosque, school, clinic, shopping centre...) where elaborated food was on display. But we went to eat ourselves in the underground where about a hundred common people were sharing simple food on a metallic tray. Some of them are South African Muslims who find it convenient to have their supper there. Others are illegal immigrants who are very grateful to have a free meal.

We went home glad to experience once more that the Holy Spirit moves people of all creeds.