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Sorcerers say children born as jinn can find hidden treasure Moroccan sorcerers hunt "possessed" children



Sorcerers believe children with certain features have the ability to contact the spiritual world

RABAT (Hassan al-Ashraf)

A split tongue and a lazy eye may sound like some sort of ailment but for sorcerers in Morocco such attributes are a sign someone possesses supernatural skills that allow them to contact the spirit world and find buried treasures.

So strong is their belief in the signs of possession, that sorcerers have resorted to kidnapping children with features such as a cross on their right hand, tongues split in the middle or a lazy right eye.

According to Moroccan human rights activists gangs of sorcerers are targeting children with the specific features because they believe such children are "zohri," or born as jinn, but were replaced with human beings upon their birth.

The tradition says that such children have supernatural perception and can see things that are not visible to humans and with such "powers" they are able to find treasure believed to be buried in mountainous areas in Marrakech, Khénifra and other southern regions like Souss-Massa-Draâ.

The children are believed to be able to see and consequently touch the treasure, unlike humans, which sorcerers fear will anger the jinns and result in severe punishment, such as being banished to the underworld.

Naturally superstitious

Moroccan rights activists have called on the government to act and said children who are abducted are physically and psychologically abused and are often murdered once the sorcerer is done with them.

In some cases, the children are later sold to gangs in different parts of Africa, said Khalid Cherkaoui

Semmouni, president of the Moroccan Center for Human Rights.

"As a human rights organization, we call upon the authorities to take the necessary measures to penalize these criminals," Semmouni told Al Arabiya. "The punishment has to be strict and deterrent to avoid crimes like this in the future."

Semmouni said Moroccans are naturally superstitious and believe in sorcery despite the fact that it is not in line with logic, religion or science.

Abdul-Malek Zaazaa, head of al- Karama Forum for Human Rights, said one solution could be to raise awareness in the community and said children with features that sorcerers are looking for should be careful.

Zaazaa warned children are being kidnapped from in front of schools or in the market or if they happen to be alone in deserted area.

(Translated from Arabic by Sonia Farid)