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In Morocco women victims of domestic violence find solace in shrines



Women victims of domestic violence in Morocco are taking refuge in the shrines of their saints in search for miracles to heal the scars of their psychological wounds. According to human rights reports, family violence accounts for 74 percent of all types of violence against women in Morocco, in clear violation to women's rights and their physical safety.

Physical violence, including beating, slapping and chaining lead women to develop traumas and psychological instability. Lacking proper counseling, they walk the footsteps of their ancestors by going to shrines in search for solace. Raqiya, 40, decided to visit the grave of "Moulay Abdullah bin Hassoun" in Sala, a city near the capital Rabat, in search for healing and guidance to her husband who she said enjoys torturing her physically refrains from fulfilling his duties towards her and her children. Raqiya said she feels "spiritual serenity" whenever she visits the shrine of her saint. She cries, touching his grave and its cover, asking guidance for her husband to return to the path she sees as righteous. She described her husband's violence as "unusual," which explains why no earthly power was unable to change him, according to her. She claims he is "possessed by evil spirits. Oum Kalthoum, another woman, said she finds "joy" when she visits the shrine of "Sidi Baliyout" in Casablanca. She praises his "good deeds in saving her from scrupulosity which affected her marital life," and would have led to divorce without a "miracle" from this saint who she said answered her call for harmony between her and her husband, and achieving what psychiatrists failed to do in spite of her regular visits. "I know that Sidi Baliyout is a mere human but one cannot neglect his good deeds and miracles as he is a saint," she said. Kareema al-Wodgheiry, sociologist, described the tradition of shrine-going as part of a journey for "soul-seeking." She attributed women going to shrines to the spread of ignorance and illiteracy. Morocco has one of the highest illiteracy rates in North Africa and the Middle East, reaching an estimated 56 percent among women and 31 percent among men.