

Belief in witchcraft fostering abuse of children

by [Al Webb](#) in the [April 4, 2012](#) issue

British police say they have investigated more than 80 witchcraft-based child abuse cases in the last decade and warned that the practice is "far more prevalent" than previously believed.

Authorities say the belief in witchcraft is widespread and growing in some African immigrant communities in Britain.

The disclosure came as a couple from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Magalie Bamu and Eric Bikubi, were sentenced to life in prison for torturing and drowning the woman's 15-year-old brother, Kristy Bamu.

Police said the two were convinced that the youth was a witch who had cast a spell on another child. They added that Bikubi had a "lifelong obsession" with a form of witchcraft known as kindoki and believed he had a special ability to detect evil.

Scotland Yard officials said they had probed 83 cases involving ritualistic or "faith-based" crimes in the past ten years—cases they believe represent only a small part of witchcraft practices in Britain.

Detective Superintendent Terry Sharpe said "this is a hidden and underreported crime and therefore difficult to deal with in terms of protecting victims from harm." Sharpe, who heads a police team that tackles religion-based child abuse, added that "the intelligence from the community is that it's far more prevalent than the reports we are getting."

Previous cases include

exorcism ceremonies; torture; attacks with knives, sticks, metal bars and hammers; drownings and disembowelments. The cases involve beliefs brought into Britain from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. —RNS