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Human Trafficking Trial Exposes Systemic Abuse in French Vineyards

Victims Recount Horrific Conditions in French Vineyard Human Trafficking Case

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A new human trafficking trial in the Bordeaux region has highlighted what the prosecution describes as a "systemic" issue. The trial, held in Libourne, involves a father and son of Moroccan origin, accused of exploiting six compatriots who had been

recruited to work in French vineyards. Deputy prosecutor Elodie Blier emphasized the seriousness of the case, stating that these actions severely harm the local wine industry.

This trial is not an isolated incident in the area. Recently, other trials in Bordeaux and Libourne have resulted in convictions of contractors and employers for similar offenses. Furthermore, another human trafficking case is set to be judged on November 19, reinforcing the perception that this problem is widespread in the region. In this latest case, the prosecution referred to the phenomenon as an "Uberization of the sector," alluding to abusive practices by contractors.

The main defendant, Ahmed Genna, a man in his fifties, is being tried for human trafficking and subjecting vulnerable people to deplorable living conditions. The prosecution has requested a two-year prison sentence, with one year to be served, along with compensation for the victims and a permanent ban on managing a commercial business. For his son, who is in his twenties, the prosecution has requested a one-year suspended sentence, arguing that he was merely following his father's orders.

During the trial, the victims described how they were recruited in Morocco with promises of steady work, a salary of €1,500 per month, and a residence permit in France. To secure this job, they were required to pay €12,000. However, once in France, the reality was starkly different. The living conditions were terrible: they were crammed into a small, filthy space, sharing mattresses on the floor, and lacking hot water. Their workdays in the vineyards were grueling, with only a 15-minute lunch break, and they received no compensation for their labor.

One of the witnesses was the first to report the situation in September 2022, after arriving in France three months earlier. He explained that he had no idea where he would live or work and had depleted his family's savings to pay the defendants. Another testimony revealed the victims' anger, as they trusted the defendants, especially Mehdi, the son of the main accused, whom they had known since childhood.

Ahmed Genna has denied all accusations, claiming the housing was adequate and that the victims deliberately made it dirty to take photographs. He also denied receiving money for facilitating their arrival in France and asserted that he did not pay them because they had not worked enough in the vineyards. In his view, the complaints were a tactic to obtain residence permits.

Genna's defense has called for acquittal, arguing that there is no proof the victims paid €12,000 and suggesting that the victims' real interest is securing long-term residence permits. The defense lawyer also criticized the consistency of the victims' statements during questioning, implying they may have been coordinated.

The trial will conclude with a verdict on November 5.