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Police quiet about African course

African organizations in Norway are stunned and angered after Aftenposten revealed the content of a Police Academy course in cultural understanding included information such as: Never knock on an African's door at night, he won't open it out of fear of being visited by an evil spirit.

The Organization against Public Discrimination (OMOD) got access to part of the curriculum material in the 'Cultural Understanding' course at the Police Academy in Oslo.

Here they found tips like Africans are afraid at night because night is the time of the evil spirits and for people with dishonest intentions, and the advise not to knock on doors after dark.

The course has been devised by a Norwegian police officer who grew up in Africa, and the academy believes OMOD has taken the quotes out of context. OMOD has filed a complaint with the Directorate of Police.

Fredrick Makosir, who emigrated to Norway from Kenya in 1993 and since founded several African organizations here, was angered by the news, and said he now understands why police treat young Africans the way they do.

"I work as a contact person for refugees, a kind of guide that tells refugees about life in Norway. Why don't the police use us if they want to learn to understand Africans?" Mokasir asked Aftenposten.

"When I came to Norway I learned that one should spit over your shoulder three times if you see a black cat. Think if I had taught people in Kenya "that is what Norwegians are like"?" Mokasir said.

Africans in the Academy course are presented as a homogenous group that fears evil spirits, uses medicine men and can often be compulsive liars. The course also said that Africans found Scandinavian prison conditions to be like living in hotels.

The police directorate has asked for more information about the course from the Academy, which is an independent unit.

Deputy police chief Beate Gangås at the directorate said that efforts were being made to fight prejudice and racism and that the Academy was part of the effort.

Gangås would not comment on the course material until she had received a report from the Academy.