

Ålesund rape reports were a bluff

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Police in the west coast city of Ålesund have determined that several different women filed false reports of rape or attempted rape this winter. Their motives are unclear, and now they face charges of their own.

Residents told media late last week they were both relieved that the rapes never occurred, but shocked that local women would conjure them up. Police hope the false reports won't discourage other women from filing genuine reports, if they are indeed victims of assault.

Five reports of rape filed in January set off a wave of fear in Ålesund, better known for its stunning scenery and art deco architecture than for serious crime. The rape reports prompted many women to stay at home in the evenings, afraid to go out, while taxi companies offered to drive women home for half price.

The local police district sent more officers out on patrol, and feared a serial rapist was afoot. The women, not believed to be acquainted, claimed their attacker was a foreign man, prompting residents of a local asylum center to condemn any rapes and offer their help to police.

After several weeks of investigation, Ålesund police determined that the reports were a bluff. On Friday they announced that no criminal conduct was involved in any of the five reports.

"We can with certainty state that the incidents never occurred," prosecutor Unni Moen Vikebakk said.

The women filing the reports now face charges of filing false claims, itself a criminal offense.

By Views and News staff

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