

A black and white photograph of a hand with weathered skin, tightly gripping a thick, frayed rope. The hand is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame. A large, bright blue diagonal shape cuts across the left side of the image, serving as a background for the title and author information.

KIDNAP FOR RANSOM GLOBAL TRENDS 2017

Prepared by NYA24
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to provide an overview of the global kidnap threat in 2017 by identifying key regional trends and analysing hotspot countries. The information is based on open source material which is collected on a daily basis by NYA24, NYA's team of analysts. The NYA Kidnap for Ransom database contains over 19,000 kidnapping incidents perpetrated since 2014 worldwide.

Based on NYA's Kidnap for Ransom data, Asia witnessed the highest number of reported kidnappings, followed by Africa, Latin America, Middle East and Europe. The three countries with the highest number of reported incidents were India, Nigeria and Pakistan. The data also showed that domestic nationals accounted for 88% of kidnapping incidents worldwide in 2017. Although the highest kidnap incident rate was recorded in Asia, foreign nationals faced a higher threat in Africa, notably in Nigeria, Libya and Somalia.

REGIONAL TRENDS

ASIA

The highest number of kidnappings recorded by NYA in 2017 took place in Asia, accounting for approximately 43% of all recorded incidents globally. The good reporting environment in India and the high number of incidents in that country contributed to this ranking. Notably, official statistics show the majority of incidents in India targeted female domestic nationals, with kidnappings for ransom constituting a very small proportion of all incidents reported to the authorities and in media sources. Female victims in India are typically targeted for forced marriages and illicit intercourse. Data compiled from open sources shows India, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan remained the regional hotspots throughout the year.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In 2017 the threat of kidnapping remained particularly elevated in Nigeria, where both criminal groups and pirate gangs remain highly active and intent on targeting individuals perceived as affluent or having a higher ransom value. In 2017 victims commonly included high-profile domestic nationals, although foreign nationals were also targeted. Data compiled by NYA shows South Africa and Kenya were ranked second and third after Nigeria in terms of the total number of recorded incidents in 2017. Notably, however, the reporting environment in both South Africa and Kenya is significantly better than that in conflict-affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, such as South Sudan and Somalia. This highlights a possible skewing of the data due to likely incident underreporting in media sources.

LATIN AMERICA

Kidnappings have continued to be a prevailing concern in many Latin American countries, particularly in Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and the Northern Triangle comprised of Guatemala,

Honduras and El Salvador. The overall kidnap threat increased substantially in Venezuela in 2017, owing to the deteriorating economic situation and persistent political tensions.

Notably, virtual kidnappings became more frequent in Latin America, with several cases reportedly being perpetrated by inmates from prisons where authorities have experienced difficulties in tracking and identifying perpetrators.

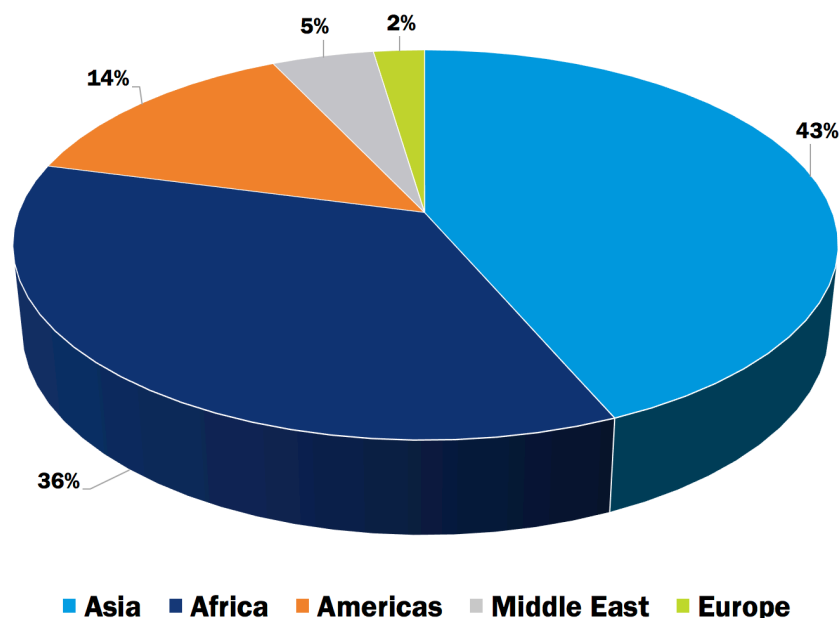
EUROPE

Although kidnappings were infrequently reported in Europe in 2017, isolated incidents did take place across the continent. Kidnappings in western Europe are rarely reported and are commonly associated with organised crime. The overwhelming majority of reported incidents were express kidnappings, in which victims are abducted for less than 24 hours.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The kidnap threat remains elevated in areas of the Middle East and North Africa prone to recurring conflict and political instability. States noted by NYA in 2017 as having witnessed a high frequency of incidents of kidnap for ransom include Yemen, Libya and Syria. Over the past year, the Middle East accounted for the highest number of politically motivated abductions.

**KIDNAPPING INCIDENTS BY REGION
JANUARY – DECEMBER 2017**

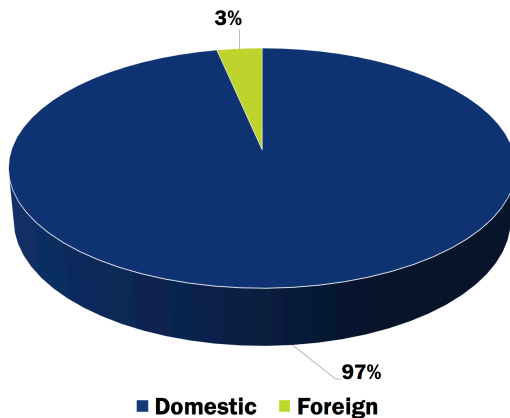


NYA24 collates information on kidnap incidents reported in open sources on a daily basis. The chart represents available open source kidnap incidents reported in English language media and should therefore be considered an approximate reflection of what occurs in each region

KIDNAPPING HOTSPOTS

MEXICO

MEXICO: KIDNAP VICTIMS



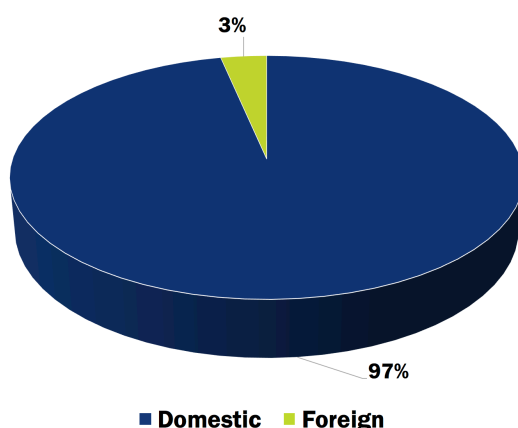
Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

According to official statistics, over 6,235 kidnappings have been reported in Mexico during the previous five years. Operations by Mexican security forces against organised criminal groups, as part of their strategy to combat drug trafficking and organised crime, have resulted in fragmenting many of these groups. With the fall of the Knights Templar cartel as well as the splintering of others such as La Familia Michoacana and Sinaloa, the former members of these groups have remained armed but without the logistics or reach necessary to continue profiting from the international drug trade. Instead, they have shifted attention to their local areas to profit from crimes such as kidnapping, micro-trafficking and extortion.

Although the threat of kidnapping has decreased since late 2013 / early 2014, when a monthly average of 225 incidents were being reported, the kidnap threat level largely ranges from substantial to severe throughout Mexico. According to the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System, 1,390 kidnappings took place in Mexico during 2017. These incidents mainly occurred in Mexico State (13.81%), Tamaulipas (14.31%), and Veracruz (13.95%). Although domestic nationals are the most frequently targeted group in Mexico, foreign nationals have also fallen victim to incidents of kidnap for ransom during 2017.

COLOMBIA

COLOMBIA: KIDNAP VICTIMS



Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

Colombia's kidnap incident rate continued its 17-year downward trend in 2017, falling from 199 kidnapping incidents in 2016 to 190 in 2017. This is a 94% decrease from the 3,572 cases recorded in 2000.

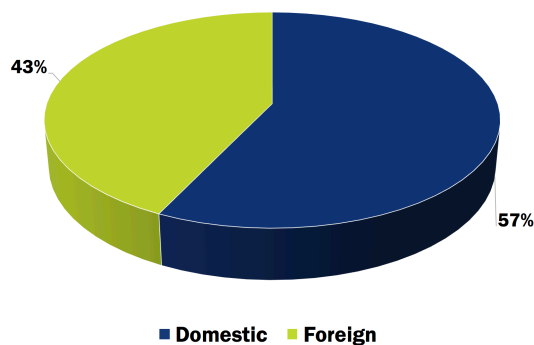
Since various guerrillas used kidnapping to finance their activities and pressure the Colombian government, this reduction in kidnappings is due in large part to the commencement of peace negotiations and the subsequent peace treaty with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Active from 1964 to 2017, the FARC was the largest guerrilla group in Colombia and most active perpetrator of kidnap for ransom.

Despite these improvements, FARC dissidents, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and organised criminal groups remain active and have continued to engage in kidnap for ransom. The most affected departments have been Antioquia, Valle del Cauca, and Norte de Santander. Sporadic abductions of

predominantly domestic nationals are highly likely to continue into 2018 as peace deal complications persist between the ELN and Colombian government. Despite the decrease in the number of kidnap for ransom incidents, express kidnappings have become more common – a trend likely to continue in 2018.

VENEZUELA

VENEZUELA: KIDNAP VICTIMS



Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

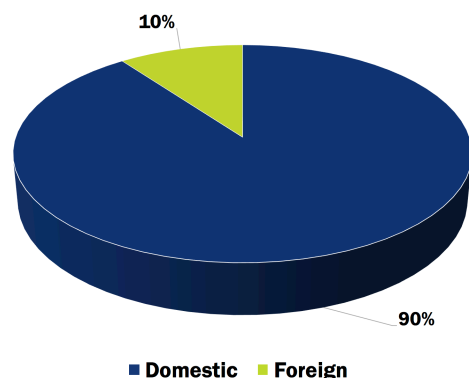
In 2017 Venezuela remained severely affected by a high number of kidnap for ransom incidents. Although official kidnap statistics have not been released for over five years, specialised NGOs have reported an increase in the number of incidents in 2017. Political instability and the prolonged economic recession have been key factors driving the threat from kidnap for ransom in Venezuela. Economic conditions continued to deteriorate in 2017, with inflation increasing by approximately 2,000%, unemployment surpassing 25% of the work force and a GDP contraction of 14%. Episodes of civil unrest in major urban areas and an increase of authoritarianism contributed to the political crisis that

resulted in the imposition of further sanctions by the US and EU.

In 2017 the overwhelming majority of kidnap incidents were reported in urban areas such as Caracas, Maracaibo, Valencia and Barquisimeto. However, abductions were also reported in rural locations, particularly on the Colombia-Venezuela border where Colombian militant and criminal groups frequently operate. Though domestic nationals make up the majority of victims, foreign nationals are commonly perceived as wealthier and more attractive targets to both kidnap for ransom syndicates and opportunistic criminals carrying out express kidnappings.

NIGERIA

NIGERIA: KIDNAP VICTIMS



Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

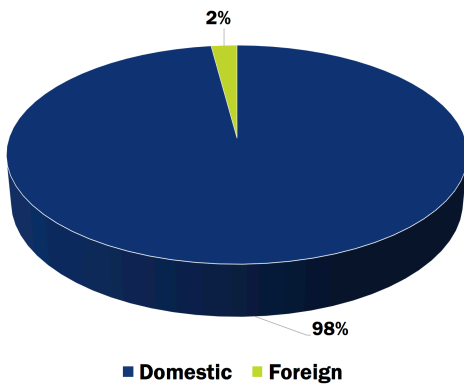
Incident data compiled by NYA from open sources shows Nigeria witnessed the highest number of incidents in Africa in 2017. The threat from kidnap for ransom is primarily fuelled by endemic corruption, inadequate policing and economic inequality. Incidents are reported across the country but are particularly concentrated within the Niger Delta region, due to the prevalence of pirate gangs and criminal groups, as well as in the northeastern region where the Islamist militant group Boko Haram remains active. Whilst kidnappings perpetrated by Boko Haram have largely been characterised by their indiscriminate and violent nature, many incidents taking place in the Niger Delta are pre-planned and targeted.

Incidents within the Niger Delta region are predominantly financially motivated and primary targets consist of middle-class or affluent domestic nationals. Foreign nationals operating in the Niger Delta and offshore in merchant vessels have also been targeted due to their perceived higher ransom value. Perpetrators are often heavily armed and have in previous incidents engaged escorting security forces

without hesitation. The frequency of kidnappings and the profile of targeted victims is unlikely to change in 2018.

AFGHANISTAN

AFGHANISTAN: KIDNAP VICTIMS



Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

In 2017 the Afghan central government remained unable to exert full control over the country. Security forces have maintained a limited influence in areas controlled by local militias and are reported to be engaged against Islamist militants and other armed groups in at least 26 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

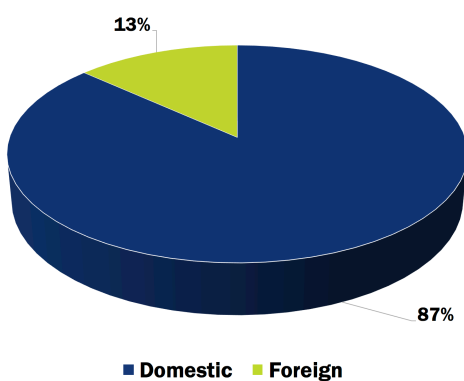
Amid a myriad of security challenges undermining Kabul's central authority, the threat of kidnap for ransom remained severe in Helmand, Farah, Kandahar, Zabol, Wardak, and Nangarhar provinces. In addition to criminal elements, Islamist groups operating in Afghanistan — including the Taliban, Haqqani Network and Islamic State (IS) — use kidnappings for financial as well as political gains.

A recurring trend identified by NYA in 2017 was the mass kidnapping of domestic nationals by Islamist militant groups from highways and villages. Incidents were regularly confirmed or suspected to have been perpetrated by the Taliban or IS.

There was only a limited number of incidents involving foreign nationals recorded in 2017, however, this is largely reflective of the lower number of foreign personnel in the country along with security provisions in place, rather than a reduction of the threat. Indicative of the possibility of kidnappings being conducted in an overtly violent manner was an incident in May 2017 in which a German employee of an NGO was killed as gunmen kidnapped a colleague in Kabul. The security situation in Afghanistan will remain poor in 2018, with kidnappings continuing to occur frequently across the country. In 2018 foreign nationals will remain an attractive target for both Islamist groups and criminal syndicates, with all areas of Afghanistan providing a fertile ground where kidnap incidents will continue to occur.

PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINES: KIDNAP VICTIMS



Source: NYA Kidnap for Ransom Database

The Philippine government's attempts to mitigate the threat of kidnap for ransom and associated crime is hindered substantially by the presence of multiple armed insurgent groups across the country.

In 2017, NYA identified the Islamist militant Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighter (BIFF) group and the Maoist New People's Army (NPA) as being the main perpetrators of abductions and kidnappings for ransom. Whilst the aim of ASG and BIFF is to establish an independent Islamic state in the southern Mindanao region, the NPA is focused on overthrowing the government to establish a Marxist state.

Regardless of their disparate aims, these groups continue to use kidnappings for ransom to fund their operations.

In addition to domestic nationals – who make up the majority of recorded victims in 2017 – foreign nationals have also been targeted by insurgent groups. ASG has previously conducted several high-profile kidnappings targeting foreign tourists and vessel crew operating offshore.

Notably, in 2017 the groups' operational capability was weakened following several security operations launched by the Philippine government, including a five-month battle to liberate Marawi city from Islamist militants, which concluded in October.

The presence of criminal groups involved in kidnap for ransom remained a concern in Luzon and particularly in Manila. In 2017, criminal elements kidnapped foreign nationals of Malaysian, Korean and Singaporean origin.

While the frequency of kidnappings targeting vessel crew offshore decreased in 2017 compared to 2016, further such incidents will remain likely in the year ahead. In 2018 the threat of kidnap will remain severe in Mindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, where Islamist militants remain active and retain maritime capabilities allowing them to carry out cross-border operations targeted at Malaysia's Sabah state.

ABOUT NYA

Since 1990 we have been committed to helping clients understand the threats to their people, information, property and reputation. Our global team provides you with the expertise to mitigate and manage security risks so that you can effectively meet objectives and focus on opportunities.

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We develop long-term, collaborative client partnerships, that put you in greater control. Our commitment to an immediate response when you need us offers certainty and peace of mind.

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CONTACT US

LONDON

40 Lime Street
London
EC3M 7AW
United Kingdom

SINGAPORE

One Raffles Place
Tower 1
1 Raffles Place
Singapore 048616
Singapore

NEW YORK

77 Water Street
New York, NY
10005
United States

