



2020

GLOBAL

KIDNAP

BRIEF



2020 Kidnap & Piracy Brief

Kidnap Types

Kidnap for Ransom incidents are predominately criminal in nature and about money, although Politically Motivated Terrorism Kidnappings can be steered towards ransoms. In many areas this is an epidemic criminal problem where anyone is a target.

The crime can be executed by well organised sophisticated gangs who carefully target their victims. Social media and even company websites have been used by perpetrators to target victims. Equally the crime can be more spontaneous, by more disorganised opportunists.

Express Kidnapping is generally more spontaneous and by individuals or small gangs who target victims for fast cash from ATM machines, hotel safes or families.

Virtual Kidnappings are extortion scams in various forms. Criminals obtain contacts and travel information, then make ransom demands when the victim is uncontactable due to a long haul flight, remote travel, etc or convince the call taker with a hoax recording or threat.

Merchant Kidnappings are normally gangs looking for targets to sell on to more organised gangs, militias or terrorists groups for money.

Picks, Fishing or Miracle Fishing are checkpoints or roadblocks which are set up to extort money or kidnap victims of value by militias, terror groups or bandits.

PMV Kidnappings (Politically Motivated) are ideologically based and normally conducted by terrorists groups to highlight a cause or change a foreign policy.

Piracy Kidnappings or Hostage is when a maritime vessel is attacked and crew members are held with the ship as a hostage or taken ashore as kidnap victims for ransom.





RC Kidnappings (religious conversation) are generally young women kidnapped and converted to a religion often to be married or for sex.

Organ Kidnappings are when a victim is targeted for surgery and organ trafficking.

IPCA (International Parent Child Abduction) is when one parent takes children overseas and out of reach.

Child abduction is when a child is abducted by a parent, or other perpetrator for emotional reasons or sex.

ST Abductions (sex trafficking) is when victims are coerced, abducted, drugged or a combination and forced into sex work.

There are a number of variations and differing terms by region, local languages and law enforcement agencies.

Who is at Risk

- Maritime
- Business travellers
- Journalists
- Humanitarian workers
- Oil and Mining travellers
- Expeditions
- Tourists
- Sex workers
- Young women
- Children of estranged parents
- Children in general
- Persons vulnerable due to conflict
- Peace keepers and military personnel
- Military contractors
- Celebrities
- High worth individuals or VIP's
- Tourists





Global Kidnapping Hotspots 2020



Global Hotspots

Libya

The civil war and security situation across Libya is extremely fragile and fluid with many armed actors. Political governance has fragmented, foreign interference with differing agendas, mercenaries, tribes, militias and terror groups are all competing for power or control over various regions. The kidnap for ransom risk is extremely high and other forms of kidnapping are common.

Nigeria

Across Nigeria corruption, scams, virtual kidnapping and kidnapping for ransom is widespread. In regions where terrorist groups operate, politically motivated kidnappings and kidnapping for information or ransoms is also high. The security situation is fast changing. Piracy Kidnappings are also common in the Gulf of Guinea.

Mali & Sahel region

Various Islamic terror groups and militias operate across the region with significant escalation in recruitment, sophisticated terrorist attacks, and both politically motivated and kidnappings for ransom. No country in the Sahel is immune from the deteriorating security situation.

Somalia

Al Shabaab terrorists continue to execute sophisticated terrorist attacks and will kidnap where they can. ISIS elements also operate in parts of the country and also conduct kidnappings. Known criminal kidnap gangs in Mogadishu have been mostly eradicated and many Pirates deterred or integrated into fisheries or other work. However, kidnap and piracy gangs galvanise at pace, meaning the kidnap for ransom and piracy risk is always there. The 2020 elections may increase the risk of violence and the kidnap threat.

Global Kidnapping

Hotspots 2020



Afghanistan

The Taliban, ISIS and other terrorist & militia groups regularly carry out kidnappings and use Police or Military uniforms and often patient sophisticated targeting to acquire high value victims. Furthermore, criminal kidnap gangs remain a threat in Kabul and some other cities, despite Police Operations to eradicate them. Merchant kidnapping is common.

Syria

The civil war, its many armed actors, mercenaries and terrorist groups, makes much of Syria a haven for kidnappings. Even Damascus has seen criminal Kidnappings for ransom.

Yemen

The civil war in Yemen, militia and terrorism activity provides a significant risk of politically motivated and ransom kidnappings. The risk of merchant kidnapping by criminal types is also high.

Iraq

Criminal kidnappings for ransom are common across parts of Iraq with criminal kidnap gangs active in some cities. Militias, including some aligned with the security forces use kidnapping as a revenue or information stream. ISIS also remain active in smaller cells and numbers, but regularly kidnap locals for information, ransoms or as a form of control over regions. The risk of politically motivated kidnappings by Iranian backed armed actors is also a risk. As such the kidnap risk remains high in most parts.

Mexico

Express kidnappings, kidnappings for ransom and virtual kidnappings remain a significant risk in parts of Mexico. Miracle fishing is common with hotel operators and taxi drivers associated with targeting victims for kidnap gangs. Drug Cartels also kidnap for information or sex trafficking. The splintering of a number of organised criminal gangs could increase kidnapping risks as they raise new revenues for other criminal ventures.



Global Hotspots

Venezuela

The political and economic fragility across Venezuela has led to significant banditry and gang violence. Kidnapping for ransom and opportunistic express kidnappings are common. Sex trafficking gangs also operate across the region with sophisticated capabilities in targeting and abducting victims.

Philippines

Abu Sayyaf terrorism, kidnappings and piracy are common, with other militia groups and criminal gangs using kidnapping and piracy as a revenue stream. As such significant parts of the Philippines and its waters remain a high risk.

Pakistan

Terrorist and militia groups will kidnap where they can, but criminal kidnap gangs also operate with express type kidnappings increasing. Virtual kidnappings have targeted travellers. Religious conversion kidnappings and organ kidnappings are also regular occurrences domestically.

India

Criminal kidnap and ransom gangs operate in larger cities, and sex trafficking gangs also operate. Student travellers have been a target by groups in the past. The abduction of victims for their organs is also a risk, although no incident against foreigners has been reported. Terrorist groups are active and hostage taking and kidnapping remains a risk.

Gulf of Guinea

Piracy and kidnapping remains a significant risk in these waters.



General Kidnap Risk



The General Kidnap Risk

MENA

Civil wars, political unrest and Islamic terrorism always provides opportunities for kidnapping risks and many incidents here go unreported. Five countries Syria, Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Yemen are dealt with as hotspots in this report above, although overall globally MENA only accounts for about 10% of all **reported** incidents. With a resurgence of ISIS expected, unrest in various regions, new criminal groups evolving and piracy off the coast of Somalia a risk, we forecast an increasing kidnap risk in 2020 in MENA. Furthermore, Iranian backed hostage taking and abduction risks have increased since the U.S strike on a Senior Commander in Iraq and criminal kidnappings are frequently committed in large busy MENA cities and remote regions.

International Parental Child Abductions (ICPA) are high in parts of the Middle East

SUB-SAHARA AFRICA

In many parts of Sub-Sahara Africa Islamic terrorism or extremist support for it, means the kidnap risk is high. Furthermore, the economic and political situation in many countries leads to fiscal desperation, banditry, smuggling and with it kidnap for ransom risks. Sex trafficking is also a significant problem in some African regions and foreigners are not immune. In 2019 around 25% of kidnap incidents were in this region, but with Islamic terrorism, banditry expanding here and piracy off the coastal regions rising we expect this to increase in 2020.

It's critical you understand the risks in the regions you travel to and seek expert advice. Kidnap gangs evolve quickly with phases of virtual, express and ransom kidnappings common until they gain enough funds to invest in other criminal ventures or are arrested.



ASIA PACIFIC

Wherever there is terrorism a kidnap risk is present and this is prevalent in parts of Asia. Furthermore the seas around Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines are increasingly prone to piracy and kidnappings. This and evolving criminal networks, of which some are turning to kidnap and ransom, and copy cat express type kidnappings in some busy cities made Asia Pacific the second most vulnerable region in 2019. It's critical you understand the risks in the regions you travel to and seek expert advice. Kidnap gangs evolve quickly with phases of virtual, express and ransom kidnappings common until they gain enough funds to invest in other criminal ventures or are arrested.

Japan has a significant number of International Parental Child Abductions (ICPA), due to a lack of laws to assist parents who separate.

AMERICAS

Whilst the risks have decreased in some South American countries due to Peace Accords or enhanced Policing and Intelligence, the Americas still reported more kidnapping incidents in 2019 than anywhere else, around 40% of all globally **reported** incidents. However, reporting has improved compared to some other regions and the majority of incidents are still local victims. Mexico and Venezuela are dealt with as hotspots in this report above, but some other countries provide a high risk. Drug cartels, criminal gangs, drugs and trafficking remains a significant problem in many areas and with it kidnap risks. Always seek advice to fully understand the regional risks which are very fluid and variable.





RUSSIA/CIS

Russian organised criminals occasionally target high value targets with kidnappings for ransom and recently a number of virtual kidnap cases have originated from Moscow.

Business travellers have been a target by kidnap gangs in the Ukraine and a number of express type kidnappings have also occurred against travellers.

Kidnap incidents occur elsewhere, but are more infrequent and combined with Europe this is a much lower risk region.

EUROPE

Europe is not immune from such incidents, but the majority of kidnap style incidents are sex related, child abductions or organised crime gangs targeting young women. Kidnapping for ransoms do occur though, normally in busy cities, but they are more often high value victims, gang or drug related. There have been an increasing number of express and virtual kidnapping incidents in some regions, due mostly to migrant gangs and copycat incidents.

Globally the majority of incidents are still local victims, but the risk is high, because the consequences can be so appalling. Many incidents are still unreported and the vast majority are managed privately through insurance related or employer engaged Kidnap Consultants and as such deliberately don't make the news. When the authorities become involved matters can become more convoluted, due to foreign policy and other political matters. That's not to say many countries authorities will effectively resolve matters and pay ransoms, but equally many will not.



How we can assist

- Travel Safety Security Briefings
- Risk, Crisis, Contingency Planning
- 1-3 day tailored safety training
- Hostile Environment Training
- Intelligence
- Check in - Management
- 24/7 in-country advice
- 24/7 Crisis Response
- 24/7 Kidnap Consultants
- Cyber threat monitoring
- Expedition Support Services

www.thecavellgroup.com

Email: info@thecavellgroup.com

Telephone: Operation Centre +61 (3) 8618 6943

Existing retained clients (or families of) should always phone the emergency contact number (on their issued blue card) in any emergency, or their dedicated Consultant on their direct line 24/7



Mitigating The Kidnap Risks - The Primary Points

- Seek specialist advice or do significant research prior to travel
- Understand the regional kidnapping types and risks, how to avoid them and reduce your in-country exposure
- Operate on a need to know basis, secure and sanitise your online profiles
- Know your Contingency Plans and any related Policies or Procedures
- Ensure your family and or employer knows exactly how to respond to any incident
- Consider a Hostile Environment Training course or at least Hostage Survival or Travel Security training days
- Ensure you have a system for receiving daily real time security intelligence
- Examine your insurance requirements with diligence
- Don't advertise your travel, specialist training or kidnap insurance cover
- Prepare yourself physically and psychologically before you travel
- Remain disciplined with situational awareness or CEAS and be aware of risk fatigue
- Carry an adequate grab bag or ready bag at all times with critical essentials
- Ensure someone you trust is tracking your phone 24/7 a GPS tracker or preferably both
- Have regular check in protocols, including under duress code words