

KIDNAP MONTHLY BRIEFING



ISSUE 96 | February 2014

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This is the ninety-sixth issue in a series of kidnap-focused reports prepared by **Control Risks** on behalf of Hiscox. The Monthly Kidnap Briefing is distributed to select clients in order to keep you informed of the trends in kidnapping worldwide and assess the risk of kidnapping to your business.

This issue includes an overview of kidnapping-for-ransom trends worldwide in 2013, a brief on extortion in Honduras and a focus on the kidnapping of foreign nationals in Lebanon.

Prepared by **Control Risks**

for 
HISCOX

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GLOBAL INSIGHT



High volumes of kidnaps in India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Afghanistan meant that Asia and the Pacific in 2013 accounted for the largest proportion of kidnaps globally for the fifth year in a row. The region saw a slight increase in terms of the proportion of global kidnaps, from 32% in 2012 to 35% in 2013. Although the absolute number of cases recorded in the Middle East increased in 2013 compared with 2012, the region's proportion of global kidnaps remained stable at 18%.

Kidnapping-for-ransom has increased dramatically across Africa over the past decade. While the continent in 2004 accounted for just 3% of global kidnaps, the figure had risen to 22% by 2012 and was the same in 2013. Meanwhile, kidnapping remains a serious problem across Latin America, though the continent's proportion of global kidnaps continues to fall: Latin America accounted for 23% of kidnaps in 2013, down from 25% in 2012. Sporadic cases were recorded in North America, the Caribbean, Europe and Russia.

Latin America



The declining proportion of recorded abductions in Latin America is not indicative of a reduced risk on the continent: Venezuela and Mexico remained among the top ten countries globally in terms of absolute numbers of abductions recorded by Control Risks in 2013. Rather, it illustrates the proliferation of kidnapping-for-ransom across the globe.

Mexico retained its number one position on Control Risks' top ten countries for kidnapping in 2013: 18% of all kidnaps recorded globally during the year occurred in the country. Kidnapping-for-ransom levels have increased every year since 2008, and there is little indication that the trend will reverse in the medium term. The majority of kidnaps that Control Risks recorded in Mexico in 2013 occurred in the Federal District, followed by the states of Veracruz, Morelos and Tamaulipas. The majority of traditional kidnapping-for-ransom victims were local nationals.

Although foreign nationals are not commonly targeted for traditional kidnaps-for-ransom, several were targeted for virtual kidnaps in 2013. Virtual kidnaps, which have become endemic in Mexico, involve the simulation of a kidnap to extort a ransom payment. Criminals are likely to feel more comfortable targeting foreign nationals for virtual kidnaps because they believe that the risk of arrest is lower than if they attempted a traditional kidnap-for-ransom. Express kidnaps, in which the victim is forced to withdraw money from automated teller (cash) machines (ATMs), also remain very common in urban areas including the capital Mexico City. Organised crime groups such as Los Zetas, the Gulf Cartel and the Knights Templar continue to carry out kidnaps-for-ransom. Low-level criminal organisations also carry out kidnaps, often invoking the names of these groups to intimidate their victims.

Guatemala fell from tenth in the top kidnapping countries globally in 2012 to 12th in 2013. However, this is unlikely to indicate an improvement in the country's security situation. Rather, it reflects the fact that the majority of kidnaps-for-ransom in Guatemala go unreported because of a lack of trust in the country's law enforcement institutions. The vast majority of kidnapping gangs operate in the capital Guatemala City, though kidnapping is also a problem in the departments of Escuintla, Huehuetenango, El Progreso and Santa Rosa. Kidnaps are mainly perpetrated by local criminal gangs, who generally target local national business owners and their dependants.

Kidnapping is a critical issue in **Venezuela**. The country was ranked fifth on Control Risks' top ten global kidnapping hot spots for 2013. Hundreds and potentially thousands of kidnaps are likely to have taken place nationwide and many cases go unreported,

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particularly short-term kidnaps-for-ransom and express kidnaps. According to Control Risks' records, the capital Caracas was the country's kidnapping hot spot in 2013: of the kidnaps recorded nationally by Control Risks, 35% took place in the capital. The majority of kidnaps are short-term – 81% of all cases lasted for a week or less – though longer-term cases lasting for weeks or even months still occur. Kidnaps of locals and foreign nationals will remain a serious problem in 2014, partly fuelled by a sense of impunity among criminal elements and a lack of a coherent government security strategy.

Colombia was ranked 11th out of the top kidnapping countries in 2013. According to Control Risks' records, the majority of kidnaps-for-ransom in 2013 occurred in rural areas, such as Cauca and Valle del Cauca departments in the south-west of the country, and Arauca department, which borders Venezuela. However, a number of incidents were reported in urban areas, including Cali and the capital Bogotá. The National Liberation Army (ELN) and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) leftist guerrilla groups remain actively involved in kidnapping. Despite continued peace talks between the FARC and the government, which began in October 2012, the FARC's involvement in the kidnapping of foreign and local nationals should be anticipated in 2014. The ELN is keen to pursue peace talks and is using kidnapping both as a pressure tactic and as a means to raise funds. Despite the high-profile nature of kidnaps perpetrated by guerrilla groups, just under half of all kidnaps in Colombia were perpetrated by criminals in 2013, according to Control Risks' records. Most victims were local nationals, though there were also a number of high-profile kidnaps involving foreign nationals, including Canadian and Spanish nationals.

Africa



The proportion of global kidnap incidents in Africa remained at 22% in 2013, with **Nigeria** accounting for 51% of all recorded incidents on the continent. The crime remains a major security issue in Nigeria and incidents were recorded almost daily. The majority of cases involved local nationals and took place in the restive Niger delta region, where criminal gangs target wealthy-looking individuals and typically hold them for around a week before reaching negotiated financial settlements. An increase in kidnaps targeting expatriates in Lagos in mid-2013 subsided following the dismantling of two kidnapping gangs in Lekki and Agbara (Lagos state). However, further spikes are likely in the medium term. Foreign personnel should remain aware of criminal groups' willingness and capability to target foreign nationals.

The kidnapping threat in Nigeria's northern states emanates principally from radical Islamist groups Boko Haram and Ansaru, which have sporadically sought to kidnap Western nationals to make financial and political demands of Western governments. In 2013, Boko Haram demonstrated its ability to launch cross-border operations: in February and November 2013 respectively, a family of French tourists and a French priest were kidnapped in remote areas of northern Cameroon and held for ransom across the border in Nigeria.

Kenya remained a high-risk location in terms of kidnapping in 2013, with Nairobi one of the counties most affected by the crime. Deficiencies in local law enforcement, coupled with stark socioeconomic disparities among the population, continue to provide incentives for criminal gangs to target affluent residents for kidnap-for-ransom. Kidnapping gangs frequently abduct family dependants, and the young children of relatively wealthy Kenyans remain one of the most prominent target groups. In a number of instances, children have been intercepted on their way to school and held for ransom. The most recent high-profile case involved 14-year-old twin sisters from the Kenyan Asian community, who were kidnapped on their way to school on 3 October 2013. They were rescued in a police operation on 14 October 2013. In North Eastern province, the porous and poorly patrolled border with Somalia remains a permissive environment for Islamist extremist group al-Shabab and affiliated groups to engage in kidnapping. No high-profile incidents were recorded here during the year, but the threat of abduction remained credible.

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Further west, the severe threat posed by Islamist groups operating in the Sahel region manifested itself at the start of 2013 with the 16 January attacks on the Tigantourine gas facility near In Amenas (Illizi province) in **Algeria**. The attack was unprecedented in terms of its scale and sophistication, and displayed Islamist groups' willingness to conduct high-risk, high-impact attacks. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and affiliated groups have proven capable of conducting abductions across the western Sahel, far beyond their operational strongholds in northern Mali, using a widespread network of local smugglers and criminals with whom they have forged mutually beneficial relationships.

2013 was also marked by the emergence of new kidnapping hot spots, notably Libya and Mozambique, which rose to second and sixth respectively on Control Risks' rankings of African countries most affected by kidnapping-for-ransom. **Mozambique** experienced a significant increase in the number of recorded incidents throughout the year. Wealthy members of the Asian Mozambican community remained the primary targets of kidnapping gangs, but the victim profile expanded in the second half of the year to include non-Mozambicans and their dependants, including children.

Kidnapping-for-ransom as a tactic of militant and criminal groups in **Libya** evolved significantly in 2013. Since the fall of former ruler Col Muammar al-Gadhafi in 2011, the popularity of kidnapping has grown among competing militant factions, who began to use the tactic to assert their power and make political demands. Local politicians have been among the most common targets and have typically been released after relatively short periods in captivity in exchange for political concessions or, in some cases, the release of prisoners. Financially motivated kidnaps of local nationals by criminal gangs became more prevalent in 2013 – this may be a sign that opportunistic criminals are increasingly seeking to exploit weaknesses in security provision and the general climate of impunity in Libyan cities. The capital Tripoli in 2013 accounted for more than half of all kidnaps recorded nationally: the eastern cities of Benghazi and Derna – key areas of operations for domestic militant groups – also accounted for a significant proportion of incidents.

Kidnapping rates in **Egypt** have increased in line with civil unrest in the country, and Egypt was ranked 15th out of Control Risks' top kidnapping countries globally in 2013. The Sinai peninsula, where Bedouin tribes and Islamist extremist groups operate, remained the highest-risk area during the year. Criminal kidnapping-for-ransom accounted for the majority (62%) of incidents in Egypt, with criminals tending to operate in urban areas such as the capital Cairo, Port Said and Minya.

Middle East



Although the Middle East accounted for only 6% of global kidnaps in 2010, kidnapping rates in the region began to soar in 2011 with the onset of the Arab spring. In particular, the civil war in **Syria** has had a dramatic effect on kidnapping rates, not just in Syria but also in neighbouring **Lebanon**. Both countries are now present in Control Risks' top ten countries for kidnapping, at ninth and seventh respectively. **Iraq** maintained its position at sixth in Control Risks' top ten countries. Kidnapping-for-ransom remained a serious security threat in **Yemen** in 2013, including in the capital Sanaa, where a number of foreign nationals were kidnapped. Kidnapping in **Yemen** remains a twofold problem; while tribes are responsible for most kidnaps, a smaller number are perpetrated by Islamist extremist group al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

As noted above, **Iraq** maintained its position at sixth in Control Risks' top ten kidnapping countries in 2013, the highest-placed Middle Eastern country. Kidnaps were recorded throughout federal Iraq, though the highest-risk areas were the provinces of Baghdad (20%), Kirkuk (19%) and Anbar (13%), according to Control Risks' records. A high number of kidnaps are likely to have gone unreported. Criminals continued to dominate the kidnapping-for-ransom trend, with typical targets including local national child dependants and employees. Foreign nationals were rarely kidnapped because the extensive security

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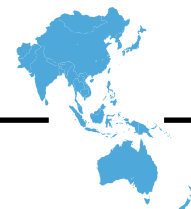
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procedures that most visitors employed acted as a deterrent. Only 2% of victims recorded by Control Risks in 2013 were foreign nationals.

Lebanon rose from eighth to seventh in the top ten kidnapping countries in 2013, with Control Risks recording a 42% increase in the number of kidnaps compared with 2012. Beqaa governorate was the highest kidnapping risk area and accounted for 67% of recorded incidents in 2013. Alongside traditional kidnaps-for-ransom, a high number of incidents were linked directly to the Syrian civil conflict. Traditional kidnaps-for-ransom were carried out by individuals for financial gain, and the highest ransom demand that Control Risks recorded in 2013 was US\$3m. Kidnaps linked to the Syrian conflict were mostly seeking political leverage, often meaning a demand for the release of a kidnapped relative in Syria in exchange for the release of a kidnap victim in Lebanon. Foreign nationals, particularly Syrian and Turkish nationals, fell victim to this kind of kidnap. The potential exists for similar incidents to occur in future.

Syria entered the top ten kidnapping risk countries for the first time in 2013 at ninth, level with Afghanistan. The number of kidnaps recorded by Control Risks has increased year-on-year since the start of the civil war in March 2011. Control Risks recorded an increase of 41% in 2013 compared with 2012, even though many incidents – particularly those affecting local nationals – were most likely not reported in the media. The majority (34%) of kidnaps in 2013 were recorded in Aleppo governorate, followed by Idlib governorate (17%). Towards the end of 2013, Control Risks noted an increase in the number of kidnaps perpetrated by Islamist extremist groups. The al-Qaida-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) became the most significant kidnapping threat in Syria. The group predominantly targeted journalists and tended to hold victims for long durations. The average duration of a kidnap in Syria in 2013 was 38 days, but many victims were held for much longer.

Asia



The continually high kidnapping rates recorded in **India, Pakistan, Afghanistan** and the **Philippines** have seen Asia record the largest proportion of global kidnaps every year since 2009, while other countries such as **Malaysia** have also contributed to kidnapping trends in the region. Kidnapping in Malaysia is mostly confined to the migrant worker community, but Filipino extremist groups also pose a threat along the eastern coast of Sabah state.

Kidnapping rates in **India** remain the highest in Asia, according to Control Risks' records. The country rose one place to second on Control Risk's top ten kidnapping countries in 2013. Although the crime was geographically widespread, Control Risks recorded the highest number of cases in Assam state (11%), followed by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh (both 9%). Dependants were most frequently targeted (30%), but employees (28%) and business owners (21%) were also common victim types. Kidnapping rarely affected foreign nationals, who accounted for only 2% of victims. Kidnaps by militant groups remained localised to the 'Seven Sister States' in north-eastern India, where employees of government infrastructure projects and agriculture employees were a common target.

Pakistan maintained its position at fourth in Control Risks' top ten kidnapping countries in 2013. High levels of criminal kidnapping-for-ransom, predominantly in urban areas, were supplemented by kidnaps by militant groups, predominantly in rural areas. Punjab province (29%) and Sindh province (27%) recorded the highest number of kidnaps stemming from criminal activity in major cities. Dependants accounted for 23% of victims in Pakistan, followed by company employees (20%) and professionals (13%). Among professionals, kidnapers often singled out doctors because of their perceived wealth. Foreign nationals accounted for 3% of victims in 2013. The relatively small number of kidnapped foreigners reflected the fact that effective security measures acted as a significant deterrent, rather than that foreign nationals were no longer considered an attractive target.

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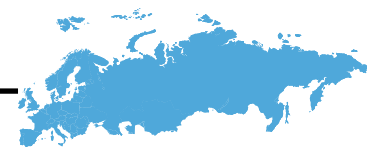
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The Philippines re-entered the top ten kidnapping countries in 2013 at eighth following a brief spell outside the top ten in 2012. Overall, kidnapping rates remained highest in the south of the country, where the kidnapping risk rating is HIGH. The Islamist extremist Abu Sayyaf Group remained the dominant kidnapping force in the south, but other groups such as the leftist New People's Army and Islamist extremist group Bangsamoro Islamic Liberation Front were also active. However, Control Risks recorded more cases in Metro Manila (17%) than in any other province in 2013, highlighting the risk of criminal kidnapping-for-ransom outside insurgency-prone areas. Foreign nationals remained at highest risk in the south, but isolated incidents also occurred elsewhere in the country, including in the capital Manila.

Afghanistan's position in the top ten kidnapping countries fell further in 2013 to ninth equal with Syria. However, the reduction in the number of cases recorded by Control Risks in 2013 (down 22% compared with 2012) is indicative of a lack of media coverage rather than a reduction in the threat. Criminal groups and militant groups continued to use kidnapping as a tactic throughout the country. Foreign nationals remained an attractive target and 13% of victims recorded by Control Risks were expatriates. Among local national kidnap victims, security forces personnel (31%) and aid workers (27%) were common targets.

Europe and CIS



Europe remains a low-risk area for kidnapping-for-ransom in 2013. Of the small number of incidents that occur in Europe, the majority take place in **Spain**. Many involve groups of foreign nationals involved in business disputes.

In **Greece**, an attempted kidnap in December 2013 targeted Andreas-Ioannis Martinos, the son of Andreas Martinos, the owner of shipping company Minerva Maritime. The victim managed to escape the would-be kidnappers. The kidnapping risk rating in Greece is LOW, but the possibility of a one-off kidnap attempt against a prominent business person or their dependants cannot be ruled out.

The kidnap risk rating is MEDIUM for most of **Russia**, rising to HIGH in the North Caucasus. Most kidnaps in the North Caucasus occur in Chechnya and Dagestan, but kidnapping levels in the region are not as severe as they have been in previous years. Outside the North Caucasus, kidnaps-for-ransom are concentrated in and around the capital Moscow, with wealthy local nationals and their dependants the main targets.

Although the risk is low, the possibility of a well-planned, one-off 'tiger' kidnap cannot be ruled out by any Europe-based business that keeps large stocks of cash or valuables on premises. A 'tiger' kidnap is one in which an employee's loved ones or family are held hostage while the employee is forced to hand over cash or valuables belonging to the company. **Ireland** is the European hotspot for tiger kidnaps. Businesses targeted in Ireland have included banks, cash-in-transit companies, post offices and high-turnover retail outlets.

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BRIEF ON LATIN AMERICA



EXTORTION IN HONDURAS

With weak and corrupt law enforcement institutions and rising levels of gang- (mara) related crime, the security situation in Honduras is extremely unstable. The country's existing problems with corruption and organised crime have fuelled further criminality, and resulted in a proliferation of low-level criminal groups. Reflecting this, the country saw an explosion in the number of extortions in 2013. Tackling the crime will be a key issue for newly elected President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who took office on 27 January.

PERPETRATORS

Three main groups carry out extortions in Honduras: powerful and violent street gangs known as maras; corrupt police; and extortion rings made up of low-level criminals who pose as gang members to intimidate their victims into paying.

According to the Honduras National Anti-extortion Force (FNA), low-level criminals pretending to be gang members are responsible for seven out of ten extortions in the country, invoking the names of well-known gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 to instill fear in their victims. This reflects the fact that the sense of insecurity created by the proliferation of corruption and organised crime in the country has itself fuelled further criminality.



MODUS OPERANDI

Extortionists' modus operandi has evolved in line with the use of social media. Criminals use social media to glean information about their victims, capitalising on the fact that many people leave personal details or upcoming plans open for public viewing on social networking sites.

Once gangs have identified a target, they use one of three methods to collect payments: door-to-door (often using minors to collect payments, ensuring that adult gang members are less likely to face arrest); slipping collection envelopes under the door; or making threatening telephone calls (often from prison). Gangs will often threaten to kidnap a business owner's employees or family members if money demanded is not paid.

TARGETS

Extortion is not a new development in Honduras – it has long been common for gangs to collect fees from taxi drivers, bus drivers and residents in areas that they control, particularly in the capital Tegucigalpa and the port town of San Pedro Sula. However, small and medium-sized businesses have been increasingly targeted in recent years. In Tegucigalpa's 16 markets, gangs are estimated to collect around US\$15 per week from

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14,000 vendors, making around US\$10m per year. More than US\$16m per year is also thought to be collected from taxi and bus drivers throughout the country, with US\$12.5m collected in Tegucigalpa alone. Small businesses in Honduras pay an estimated US\$30m in extortion payments every year.

These payments are taking their toll. The intense pressure that businesses have come under from extortionists led to the shutdown of an estimated 17,500 small companies in Honduras over the past year, directly or indirectly affecting around 25,000 Hondurans. This highlights the devastating effect that the crime is having on the country's economy.

POLICE CORRUPTION

Honduras's police force is in urgent need of reform. In 2011, the vice-president of the Honduran Congress claimed that up to 40% of the force's members had ties to organised crime. Members have frequently directly participated in criminality in the country, and it is not uncommon for current and former police officers to carry out extortions.

Former president Porfirio Lobo's administration made some attempts to reduce corruption, giving the military more law enforcement duties and creating a commission to purge the police of criminal elements. However, progress has been slow. The commission has met with a marked lack of co-operation by police officials, and the two-year-old police reform process had led to just seven confirmed dismissals as of mid-January 2014.

BLEAK OUTLOOK

A key question for Hernandez is whether he will show the necessary political will to eliminate corruption within the police. A major tenet of the new president's strategy for reforming Honduras's security forces is to expand the Military Police of Public Order, which began operations when he was head of Congress. The use of the military to carry out policing duties is a tactic that has been employed across Central America, but with little effect on crime rates.

Given the myriad of factors that are contributing to Honduras' current security crisis, the outlook for the security situation remains bleak. Without a considerable improvement in broader institutional capacity, extortion levels are unlikely to fall significantly in the medium term.



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FOCUS ON

KIDNAPPING IN LEBANON: REVIVAL OF TREND TO TARGET FOREIGN NATIONALS?

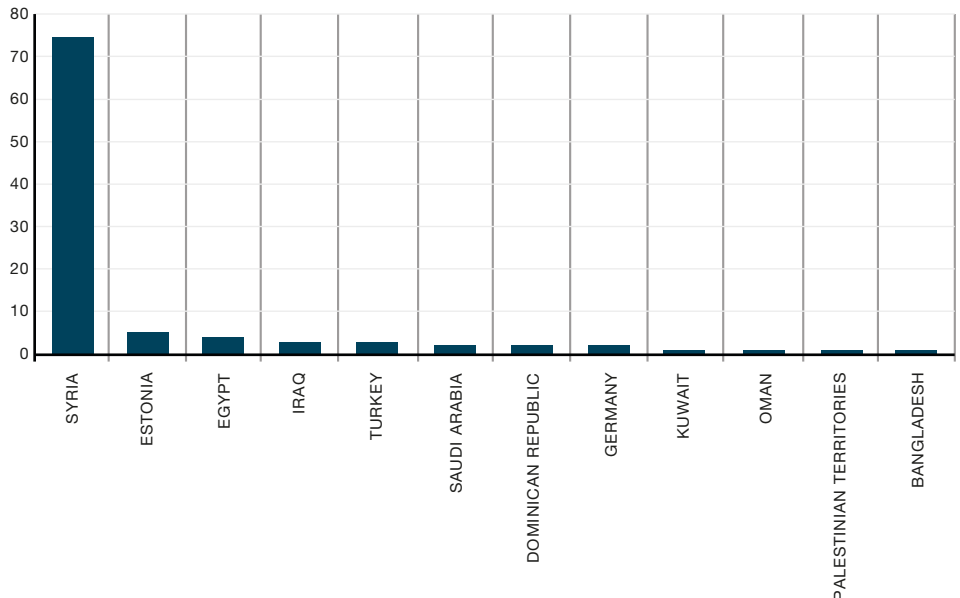
Foreign nationals feature highly among the kidnapping victims that Control Risks has recorded in Lebanon since the beginning of the civil war in neighbouring Syria in March 2011. Victims tend to hail from other Middle Eastern countries, but other nationalities have been sporadically recorded. The increase in kidnaps of foreigners is in line with a general rise in kidnapping in Lebanon, particularly in the governorates of Beqaa and Beirut. Two types of kidnapping have emerged: kidnaps by criminal gangs and kidnaps directly related to the Syrian civil war.

According to Control Risks' records, foreign nationals account for a narrow minority (49%) of recorded victims in Lebanon since the start of the conflict in Syria. However, a much higher number of kidnaps are likely to affect local nationals than are reported to the media or local authorities. At the same time, kidnaps of foreign nationals are almost always reported in local media because they are viewed as newsworthy, so the proportion of recorded foreign national victims is likely inflated by reporting trends.

THE EFFECT OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

The surge in the number of kidnaps affecting foreign nationals in Lebanon can mostly be directly attributed to the conflict in Syria. Syrian nationals face a higher risk of kidnapping in Lebanon than any other foreign nationalities, and have accounted for 75% of kidnapped foreigners in Lebanon since the beginning of 2011, according to Control Risks' records. Syrians are often targeted in tit-for-tat kidnaps after a Lebanese person has been kidnapped, either in Syria itself, or otherwise in Lebanon and then taken across the border to Syria. Lebanese family members of the victim then kidnap Syrian nationals to put pressure on those holding their own kin to release them.

Figure 1: Nationalities of victims as a percentage of the total foreign national victims: 1 January 2011 - 1 January 2014



As highlighted in the graph above, kidnaps of Syrian nationals have been interspersed with occasional kidnaps of members of other nationalities. In some cases, those kidnaps were also linked to the Syrian civil war. Armed men in August 2012 kidnapped Kuwaiti national Issam al-Houti, aged 52, as he arrived at his home in Beqaa governorate; the security forces rescued him two days later. No ransom was paid, though a demand of US\$2m was received. Houti was severely beaten by his captors, who accused him of funding Syrian rebels.

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In other incidents, four Turkish nationals were kidnapped in three separate incidents in Beirut governorate between August 2012 and August 2013. The Lebanese kidnapers were attempting to gain traction with a Syrian opposition group that had been holding a group of Lebanese pilgrims in Aleppo (Aleppo governorate, Syria) since May 2012.

The last two Turkish victims were kidnapped in August 2013 from the Beirut airport road and were pilots employed by Turkish Airlines. They were released in October after the Lebanese pilgrims in Syria were finally freed. In all three cases, the Turkish nationals were deliberately targeted because the kidnapers believed that the Turkish government – as a supporter of the Syrian opposition – would be prompted to take action to secure the release of the Lebanese pilgrims to save their own citizens. Although the Lebanese pilgrims are now free, other Lebanese victims are known to be being held in Syria, and similar responses in Lebanon cannot be ruled out in the future.

KIDNAPPING FOREIGNERS FOR A FINANCIAL RANSOM

Traditional kidnapping-for-ransom by criminal gangs has also increased since the start of the Syrian civil war. Wealthy local businessmen are frequently targeted and Control Risks has recorded demands of up to US\$15m. The victim in that case, a 73-year-old financier who was kidnapped in Beqaa governorate in September 2012, was released following the payment of a US\$600,000 ransom.

Foreign nationals are also occasionally kidnapped for ransom. Syrian nationals again account for the majority of victims in these types of incidents. Ahmed Kamal al-Azeb, who was employed at a flower plantation, was kidnapped on the Taanayel highway (Beqaa governorate) on 9 September 2013. The kidnapers demanded US\$1.5m for his release and claimed that he had been moved to Syria. They threatened to kill him if the amount was not paid. He was released ten days later after the family had paid US\$10,000; local security forces arrested three people later the same day and recovered the full amount. In a separate incident, Iraqi-Lebanese national Wafer Bahnam was kidnapped in the Mansourieh area of Metn district (Mount Lebanon governorate) on 10 October 2013. The kidnapers demanded US\$1m from his family: Bahnam claimed that he was released on 18 October without a ransom being paid.

Many foreign nationals are targeted in opportunistic rather than targeted incidents. The most recent kidnap of foreign nationals occurred in December 2013, when two Omani nationals were kidnapped near the city of Baalbek (Beqaa governorate). They were travelling in a taxi from the airport in Beirut when they were stopped at a checkpoint and kidnapped. It is not clear whether a ransom was either demanded or paid, but the victims were released three days later. Control Risks' kidnapping risk rating for Beqaa governorate is HIGH, and personnel travelling overland without sufficient security arrangements could fall victim to opportunistic kidnapers.

The motivation behind other incidents was even less clear. Two women from the Dominican Republic were kidnapped from a nightclub in Beirut (Beirut governorate) in the early hours of 26 July 2013. Two suspects were arrested and the girls were recovered in the suburbs of Aرسال (Beqaa governorate) later the same day. The kidnapers reportedly intended to transfer the victims to Syria, where there is less pressure from law enforcement agencies, but it is not clear if they intended to make a financial demand. Nevertheless, the incident is a reminder that kidnapping can occur anywhere, and that foreign nationals need to remain vigilant.

SUMMARY

Syrian nationals face a high risk of targeted abduction in Lebanon because of continuing tensions over the Syrian civil war. Nationals of other Middle Eastern countries that support the Syrian opposition, such as Turkey, could also be deliberately targeted in future should a long-term hostage situation involving Lebanese nationals arise in Syria. In addition, foreign nationals of any country may fall victim to opportunistic kidnapers if travelling overland, particularly through Beqaa governorate. Some kidnapers use opportunistic tactics such as roadblocks, and foreign nationals could find themselves in the 'wrong place at the wrong time'. Overland travel, particularly through Beqaa governorate, is consequently assessed as high-risk.

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ABOUT US



Control Risks' services are exclusively retained by Hiscox. In the event of a kidnap, detention or extortion incident covered by Hiscox, clients will benefit from Control Risks' services as part of their insurance policy.

CONTROL RISKS

Control Risks is a leading international business risk consultancy. It offers a range of integrated political risk, investigative, security and crisis management services to corporate, government and private clients worldwide.

Since its foundation in 1975, Control Risks has advised clients on the resolution of 2,499 kidnap and extortion cases in 127 different countries, with 46,203 person-days aggregate duration. Cases have ranged from traditional kidnaps-for-ransom, express kidnaps, hostage takings, ship and aircraft hijacks to political detentions, product extortion and contamination and other threat extortions. Control Risks has a full-time team of Response Consultants, available for immediate deployment in response to a crisis anywhere in the world. Response Consultants will advise on negotiation strategies and on how to manage the various interests of the victim, family, employers, the media, the government and local law enforcement agencies.

The Response Division has its own dedicated team of research analysts. As well as supporting consultants deployed on cases, they maintain the International Kidnap Online Service (IKOS) which follows the trends in kidnapping worldwide and allows clients to assess the risk to their business. In addition to IKOS, Response Research produces commissioned kidnap and extortion analysis of any country or sector. If you are interested in any of these services, please write to response_research@controlrisks.com

For more information about Control Risks, please visit our website at www.controlrisks.com

HISCOX

Hiscox is the world's largest provider of specialist kidnap, detention and extortion insurance, with a market share of 60-70% by premium income. We cover companies and individuals against all forms of extortion and can protect your assets from illegal demands and the consequential associated expenses.

Our clients include multinational companies operating in high risk regions of the world, key executives working in commercially sensitive positions and individuals whose wealth or fame may attract the attention of criminals.

Hiscox kidnap and ransom underwriters are the most experienced in the field. Our knowledge of the sector enables us to make quick decisions on cover, no matter how unusual the request. We are highly skilled in handling what may be a very difficult and sensitive emergency. Our specialist policies can be tailored to suit individual needs and circumstances.

We have underwriting teams based in Guernsey, Paris, Cologne, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and at Lloyd's of London.

For further information, please contact us at kr.guernsey@hiscox.com