



#### Africa

**Democratic Republic of the Congo:** The threat of kidnap for ransom in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is generally assessed as severe; however, this rises to critical in the east of the country due to ongoing armed conflict. Domestic nationals engaged in the local economy as well as those employed by NGOs are frequently targeted in the east. On June 7, two employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen between Kirumba and Beni, North Kivu province. The victims were later freed with unspecified injuries on June 15, and no ransom was reported to have been paid. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**Kenya:** The National Crime Research Centre published a report that listed kidnapping as the leading emerging security threat in the country. The report that covered 20 counties said youths were the majority of kidnapers and attributed this to high unemployment in the largest group of the country's population. Revenge is given as the main socio-cultural motive for kidnapping while ransom payment was a major financial reason and reducing political rivalry was the main political motive. A worrying statistic in the report was that 36.8% of Kenyans were kidnapped by security agents. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 21, 2017*)

**Libya:** The threat of kidnap for ransom in Libya remains critical throughout the country predominantly due to elevated political instability and the absence of formal law enforcement agencies. These conditions have led to a permissive environment for kidnap for ransom to occur and the risk to domestic and foreign nationals will continue amid ongoing clashes between the competing governments, Islamist militants and militia forces. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**Mali:** The Swedish Government released a statement saying Johan Gustafsson (42), a Swedish citizen, had been released by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) after six years in captivity. He had been riding a motorbike from Sweden to South Africa when he was kidnapped in Timbuktu by armed men while dining with Stephen McGowan, a South African, and Sjaak Rijke, a Dutchman, on the terrace of their hotel in November 2011. A German who tried to escape was shot dead but Mr. Rijke's wife managed to escape. Mr. Rijke was rescued by French Special Forces in April 2015. There was no mention about the fate of Mr. McGowan. Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom said the victim's release was thanks to "extensive efforts" and co-operation between the Swedish Foreign Ministry, police and "foreign authorities". She declined to say any more. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 26, 2017*)

**Nigeria:** A newspaper report claimed that kidnapping had become the new oil in the country. In the old days, kidnapers were mainly a bunch of misguided militants in the creeks of the Niger Delta who targeted expatriate oil workers, popularly called "oyibo", as a means of venting anger against oil majors and kidnapping was restricted to the creeks where oil wells and facilities were located. However, kidnapers now operate everywhere that has bred a new age of millionaires. Recent kidnappings have shown that Nigeria may have surpassed the combined revenue collected by kidnapers in Yemen, North Africa and Somalia put together. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 4, 2017*)

**Sudan:** Amid high levels of political instability and ongoing civil conflicts, the threat of kidnap in Sudan is regarded as severe, rising to critical in the Darfur region and along border regions with South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Chad. Conflict in these areas as well as the limited presence of Sudanese security forces has created a permissive environment for kidnappings



to occur. Armed groups commonly perpetrate financially motivated kidnappings as a means of funding their operations. Abductions have targeted foreign nationals working within the NGO and energy sectors because of their perceived higher ransom value. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

#### Asia

**Afghanistan:** According to a senior government official, a US citizen, working on a World Bank funded project for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, was kidnapped from outside his house in the Karte Char area of Kabul, early in the morning. No group had claimed responsibility. The Head of the Kabul Police's Crime Department said that the kidnappers wore Afghan security force uniforms in order to trick the victim into stopping his vehicle. Alex Ferguson, a spokesman for the World Bank, denied the victim worked for the World Bank. He said he understood the victim was an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock who worked for the National Horticulture and Livestock Project that is funded by a World Bank managed trust fund. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 18, 2017*)

**India:** Hyderabad police announced that they had arrested two members of a kidnapping for ransom gang in connection with the kidnapping of Praduman Lohia and his business partner, Bharath Lila. The two men had travelled to Rajasthan after they were told there was a lot of copper scrap available for sale. On arrival, they were kidnapped and the kidnappers demanded a ransom of Rs.1 crore, 20 lakh (USD 237,400) but later settled for Rs.50 lakh (USD 98,900) that was to be paid into one of the suspects' bank accounts. The kidnappers did not plan to release the two victims until they were able to withdraw the money from the account. After five days in captivity, the victims managed to escape

and report their ordeal to the police. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 14, 2017*)

**India:** The Meerut Crime Branch arrested five suspects in connection with the kidnapping of the 17 year old son of a Meerut scrap dealer on June 23. The kidnappers contacted the victim's family and demanded a ransom of Rs.5 crore (USD 989,000). The gang members dispersed and continued to call the victim's family from numbers with fake IDs. When the gang realized the police were closing in on their hideout at Noida, they released the victim unharmed on June 25. One of those arrested was Sohanvir Chaudhary, a graduate, who won a silver medal for the javelin in the National Games in Guwahati in 2011. The police said he had been involved in two previous kidnappings in 2013 when he collected ransoms of Rs.80 lakh (USD 158,250) and Rs.50 lakh (USD 98,900). (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 29, 2017*)

**Pakistan:** Six kidnapped Pakistani employees of Geofizyka Krakow, a Polish oil and gas company, were released by their kidnappers in north-western South Waziristan region. The employees had been kidnapped by a suspected faction of the Taliban in November 2016 when travelling in vehicles about 80 kilometres from Dera Ismail Khan. The exact circumstances surrounding the release were unclear and all queries to the Polish Embassy were redirected to the Polish Foreign Ministry in Warsaw. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 4, 2017*)

**Thailand:** The police announced the arrest of three Japanese men on suspicion of kidnapping and assaulting Tsunemi Watanabe (55), another Japanese national who manages a medical equipment business in Thailand, who they rescued on June 9 from a Bangkok apartment where he had been tied up and blindfolded. The victim had been kidnapped at around 4:00pm on June 5 in Bangkok's central business district. His Thai wife became concerned and alerted



the police. The three suspects had demanded a ransom of 6 million baht (USD 176,500). The victim's right leg had been broken with a baseball bat and his health was declining. He had known one of the arrested suspects some years ago in Japan but their friendship had soured over money. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 10, 2017*)

### Europe

**Holland:** The police announced that they had made three arrests in the investigation into the kidnapping of a 37 year old Rotterdam man in Amstelveen on March 9, 2017. A 29 year old man who had been arrested previously, appeared in court and it was revealed during the hearing that the kidnappers had demanded a ransom of Euros 1 million (USD 1.1 million). The victim was given one hour to arrange the money against the threat that otherwise something would happen to his wife and children. The victim was kidnapped by being forced into a car by several masked men and was later found wounded on a street in Leiden. He had severe head wounds and one of his fingers had been cut off. Earlier in June the police announced they had made a breakthrough in the case after investigators had discovered the house on Spaanestraat in Leiden where the victim was being held. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 23, 2017*)

**Spain:** A Dutchman of Serbo-Croat origin was abducted on his way home in Lloret del Mar (Catalonia autonomous community) on June 11. The kidnappers contacted the victim's wife by telephone and demanded a ransom of EUR 1.5m (USD 1.7m) in exchange for his safe release. The victim was rescued 11 days later in Casarrubios del Montes (Castile La Mancha autonomous community) following a joint rescue operation by the National Police and the Catalonia Mossos d'Esquadra police force. The Dutch businessman was abducted by a group of men disguised as police officers, and forced at gunpoint into the boot

(trunk) of a vehicle. The kidnappers originally held the victim approximately one hour away from Lloret del Mar. However, the gang then moved him to a location between Madrid and Toledo (Castile-La Mancha autonomous community). On June 22, the kidnappers issued an ultimatum for the wife to deliver the ransom to a hotel in Casarrubios del Montes or else her husband would be killed. Four suspects were arrested at the scene of the drop, including a Romanian national who had studied medicine in the capital Madrid and had access to hypnotic drugs that were used on the victim throughout his captivity. One further suspect was later arrested. (*Control Risks July 4, 2017*)

### Middle East

**Iraq:** Despite strategic gains against Islamic State (IS) militants in the city of Mosul by US-backed Iraqi forces during the reporting window, the threat of kidnap for ransom in areas vulnerable to the group is deemed critical. IS militants continue to operate along the western Syria-Iraq border, central Iraq and in the immediate vicinity of Mosul. The group are likely to increasingly perpetrate abductions in order to fund their ongoing operations as their territory reduces. According to NYA statistics, previous ransoms demanded by IS for high-value domestic and foreign nationals have ranged from USD 10 million to 200 million. Kidnap for political, sectarian, ethnic and financial motivations across the remainder of Iraq is a persistent concern and regarded a severe threat. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**United Arab Emirates:** Two Asian men, on June 14, kidnapped an Asian woman in Dubai, reportedly following a financial dispute relating to a debt of AED 3,000 (USD 800). The victim was taken to an apartment in a neighbouring Emirate, from where she was forced to call a friend and demand AED 50,000 (USD 13,600) for her safe release. This incident is reflective of kidnapping trends in the country. Control Risks



consistently records a small number of kidnaps in the UAE each year, most of which occur in Dubai. The majority of these incidents are contained within the South Asian community. In another recent case, three men (two Indian nationals and one Bangladeshi national) on August 23, 2016 kidnapped an Indian businessman in Dubai. The kidnappers demanded two cheques, one for AED 380,000 (USD 103,500) and another for AED 25,000 (USD 6,800) for his safe release. The victim did not have his cheque book with him at the moment of the abduction, so the kidnappers forced him to call his wife. She prepared both cheques, and two kidnappers picked them up from the victim's house. The victim was subsequently released. The media in late May reported that the Dubai Criminal Court had convicted three suspects in relation to this case. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**Yemen:** Throughout June, the ongoing conflict between Houthi militants and the Saudi Arabian-led coalition, the spread of cholera as well as the emerging famine contributed to the deterioration of the security situation in Yemen. Kidnappers have been able to act with impunity in this climate and the threat of kidnap for ransom to domestic and foreign nationals is likely to remain critical for the medium to long term. Despite few incidents recorded by NYA in June, this is likely due to the combination of a dangerous reporting environment and fear of reprisals. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

### Latin America and the Caribbean

**Argentina:** According to a report, the number of reported kidnapping incidents during the first five months of 2017 was 112 throughout the country. Ninety percent of the incidents occurred in el Capital and Gran Buenos Aires. The regions of Moron and Lomas de Zamora registered the highest numbers. The report added that the true figures are higher as not all

kidnapping cases are reported. In addition, cases of “virtual kidnap” and “express kidnap” have also increased. According to statistics released by la Unidad Fiscal Especializada en Secuestros Extorsivos (Ufese), the majority of victims of “express kidnap” are adult men, most incidents happen between 10:00pm and midnight and last for up to 4 hours. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 9, 2017*)

**Argentina:** A 59-year-old unnamed economist who works for a multinational agricultural company, was kidnapped, forced into the car and held hostage while driving round. The family was contacted for a ransom demand and hours later, the victim was released in Villa Atiza, Ituzaingo, after the family had dropped the ransom in el Shopping Plaza Oeste de Castelar. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 10, 2017*)

**Argentina:** A woman aged about 65 years, was killed when the car she was travelling in with the criminals who had kidnapped her crashed while being chased by police. She had been kidnapped at San Jose, Temperley, Lomas de Zamora. The kidnappers contacted her family and demanded a ransom. The family informed the police who followed them to the location nominated by the kidnappers for the payment. The kidnappers tried to escape and crashed the car in the process. One kidnapper was also killed and two were seriously injured. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 11, 2017*)

**Argentina:** On June 1, two armed assailants kidnapped the son of a prominent politician as he arrived at his family's home in Castelar, Morón (Buenos Aires province). The assailants demanded that the victim call his parents to gather a ransom payment for his release. He was unable to contact them because their mobile (cellular) telephones were switched off, so the assailants took him to his family home to steal cash, valuables and a vehicle. This incident occurred less than two weeks after the abduction of a well-known





lawyer in Castelar. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**Argentina:** National media source Perfil reported on the creation of a third Federal Prosecutor’s Office covering the jurisdiction of Morón, which will house an Office of the Specialised Anti-Kidnap Unit (UFESE). Perfil added that the number of kidnaps recorded west of the capital Buenos Aires led to the creation of the new office, which will also have jurisdiction over nearby Merlo and Ituzaingó. Seventy-two out of a total of 229 kidnaps recorded nationally by UFESE in 2016, took place within the jurisdiction of Morón’s existing two Federal Prosecutor’s Offices. Kidnappers in these areas and in the wider Buenos Aires province primarily target wealthy locals, including business personnel, professionals and their dependents. They will frequently target people based on the vehicles they are driving rather than their specific profile. In a statement, the mother of the victim in the most recent incident claimed that the kidnap was random. She said that the kidnappers had asked her son what his family did, implying that they had done no prior research and were unaware of her public profile as a politician. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**Bolivia:** Ronald Polanco, counsellor at the Court of Accounts of Acre State, reported to the Civil Police that his brother had been kidnapped on the border with Brazil, while returning from his farm near Cobija to his residence in Braileia, Brazil. The Civil Police advised him not to reveal any further details while an investigation was going on. According to reports, the kidnappers had contacted the victim’s family and demanded a high ransom. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 7, 2017*)

**Brazil:** A businessman aged 30 years was kidnapped upon arriving to Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sol, after reading an announcement on a website that there was aluminium for sale. He met one of the alleged

aluminium salesmen in a supermarket in the East Zone. He was taken to a house in Rua Tenente Alpoim, Sao Jose district, where the criminals put him under pressure and he was forced to set up a transfer equivalent to the value of the supposed aluminium “sale” to a bank account nominated by the criminals. The transfer was due to take place on June 6, but it was prevented by the intervention of Deic agents who were investigating a similar scam in Porto Alegre on May 11, 2017. The victim was released unharmed, the police arrested three men and have identified a fourth suspect. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 2, 2017*)

**Brazil:** Two men talked their way into the house of a female bank manager with Sicoob in Nova Serrana before taking her away in her own car to her branch in Perdigo where they held other bank workers, including a security guard, at gunpoint while they robbed the bank. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 6, 2017*)

**Colombia:** The National Liberation Army (ELN) continued to conduct kidnappings during the reporting period. On June 19, two Dutch nationals were abducted in El Tarra, Norte de Santander department. Following governmental pressure, the victims were released on June 23. According to one of the victims, the Dutch nationals were abducted because ELN rebels believed they were American agents. Rebel groups operating in Colombia are known to target foreign nationals and high-profile individuals to gain political leverage and generate international media attention. Domestic nationals were also targeted within the Norte de Santander department in June. On June 27, a rancher named Roberto Flórez Villamizar was rescued by GAULA (Unified Action Group for Personal Liberty) forces after being kidnapped by armed perpetrators on June 12 in Chitagá. On June 15, poultry farmer Oscar Elí Cardenas was allegedly freed by Los Pelusos guerrillas after being kidnapped in Ocaña on May 18. It is not known whether a ransom was paid. Domestic



and foreign nationals face an increased kidnap threat in Norte de Santander as the ELN, the Los Pelusos guerrilla group and other criminal elements are known to operate with little interference from security forces. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**Colombia:** A kidnap threat also persists in areas previously controlled by the FARC as new criminal organizations expand their sphere of control. On June 1, Fabiola López was kidnapped by armed men in San Cayetano, Puerto Guzmán municipality. The kidnapers made an initial ransom demand of approximately USD 220,565, however, the victim was rescued by the GAULA on June 5. The ELN is likely to carry out further kidnappings, primarily against high-profile domestic individuals and / or foreign nationals in an attempt to negotiate a better peace deal with the government. Simultaneously, financially motivated kidnappings will probably continue to be perpetrated by dissidents and criminal groups in the short to medium term. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**Colombia:** On June 6, the newspaper El Espectador reported that statistics compiled by the National Police indicated that there were 67 express kidnaps (paseos millonarios) in the Colombian capital Bogotá between January and April. This represented an increase of 52% on the same period in 2016, though many other incidents are likely to have gone unreported to the authorities. These statistics point to the continued threat of express kidnapping in Bogotá. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that the crime has become less widespread since the early 2010s, possibly because of the emergence of mobile (cellular) telephone app-based taxi services, the majority of incidents (75%) still take place in taxis. There was also a threefold increase in express kidnaps in private vehicles in the first four months of the year. The crime occurs throughout most of the city, and the National Police recorded incidents

in at least 17 out of the capital’s 20 districts during this period. However, the city’s more affluent districts in the north are the primary flashpoints for this crime. The largest numbers took place in Chapinero, Santa Fé and Kennedy. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**Colombia:** The US State Department warned US citizens of the risk of travel to Colombia and urged them to exercise caution as violence linked to domestic insurgency, narco-trafficking, crime and kidnapping occur in some rural and urban areas. The warning added that violent crime was a threat throughout the country and kidnapping remained a threat although US citizens were not specifically targeted. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 17, 2017*)

**Colombia:** The United Nations called on the kidnapers of Herledy Lopez, a UN employee working for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, to release Proof of Life (PoL) and to establish contact in order to facilitate his release. The victim was kidnapped more than one month ago and is being held in the jungles of Guaviare province. The Director of the UN’s Information Centre for the Andean Region told French news agency AFP that they have received information that the victim is well. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 18, 2017*)

**Colombia:** Dek Johannes Bolt (62), a journalist, and Eugenio Ernest Follender (58), a cameraman, both who work with the Dutch TV programme “Sporloos” that traces lost relatives, were kidnapped near El Tarra, Catatumbo, near the Venezuelan border. On June 23, the ELN announced on Twitter it had released the two Dutch journalists “in perfect condition”. On June 24, Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Bert Koenders confirmed the men had been released unharmed. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 20, 2017*)



**Mexico:** On June 26, unidentified gunmen entered Mar & Sea, one of the most exclusives restaurants in Culiacan, Sinaloa state, and kidnapped eight people. The majority of the victims were released later on the same day after each had paid an undisclosed ransom amount. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)

**Mexico:** On May 30, the Guanajuato State Attorney General's Office arrested a suspect in connection with a series of kidnaps of high-profile and high-net-worth individuals over the course of a decade. Investigations revealed that the suspect, known as Comandante Emilio – a former member of a Chilean armed group – was a member of a gang that primarily targeted people who attended an upmarket Golf Club in San Miguel de Allende (Guanajuato state). The gang was capable of holding its victims for months, demanded multi-million-dollar ransom payments and conducted elaborate negotiations. High-profile abductions garner attention from the national and international press, shining a light on the crime and encouraging businesses to reassess their security management. However, it is important that businesses are aware that kidnapping today poses a threat to almost their entire employee base, from business owner to entry-level recruit. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**Mexico:** On June 14, armed masked men kidnapped a businessperson in the construction industry from a golf club in Mexicali (Baja California State). Important business districts are also far from immune. Almost all of the municipalities of the commercial hub of Monterrey (Nuevo León state) have seen a dramatic spike in kidnapping since early 2016. Control Risks continues to record more ransom demands in excess of USD 1m in Mexico than anywhere else in the Americas. Lower-level gangs will still target affluent locals when the opportunity presents itself, and when they perceive cracks or lapses in their targets' security

management. (*Control Risks – Monthly Kidnap Briefing, June 2017*)

**México:** Guanajuato Attorney General Carlos Zamarripa told a press conference that a lady with double American and French nationality, later named as Nancy Michelle (70), who had been kidnapped in San Miguel de Allende on March 13, 2017, had been rescued in a police operation after being held for 78 days. He added that no ransom was paid although USD 1 million had been demanded. One suspect was arrested and others are being sought. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 2, 2017*)

**México:** According to the head of la Fiscalía de Secuestro y Delitos de Alto Impacto (FISDAI) in Puebla, on June 9, agents rescued a businesswoman, aged 42 from a house in Valle de San Miguel, Huejotzingo, Puebla. The unnamed victim had been kidnapped on June 4 as she left her house for work. Shortly after the kidnapping, the criminals contacted her husband and demanded a ransom of 10 million pesos (USD 491,650). The kidnappers contacted the victim's husband on 17 occasions to negotiate the ransom. FISDA agents intercepted the calls and located the house where the victim was being held before mounting a rescue operation and arresting six suspects. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 11, 2017*)

**México:** Figures released by la Secretaria de Gobernacion (Segob) showed that there were 125 reported kidnapping incidents across the country in May. The entities with the most reported incidents were la Ciudad de Mexico and Estado de Mexico. During the month, there were 137 kidnapping victims, 111 in the states and 26 in la Ciudad de Mexico. The most kidnappings were reported in Estado de Mexico, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Tabasco and la Ciudad de Mexico. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 19, 2017*)



**Trinidad and Tobago:** Gregory Laing, owner of Puff and Stuff Bakery, San Fernando, was kidnapped from outside his business premises. A short time later, an employee arriving for work saw the victim's Mercedes in the parking lot but there was no sign of the victim. A bunch of keys and a cell phone were on the ground near the abandoned car. The victim's family received a call demanding ransom. The victim was released a few hours later, after a relative had paid two ransom amounts at different designated locations. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 29, 2017*)

**Venezuela:** Fermin Marmol, a noted criminologist and lawyer, expressed concern that kidnapping for ransom gangs were increasing in the barrios of Caracas and were now kidnapping people both during the day and at night. According to him, during the first five months of 2017, there had been an increase of 10% in kidnappings per day. Sergio Gonzalez, the former Director of la Direccion Contra Extorsion y Secuestro del Cuerpo de Investigaciones Cientificas, Penales y Criminalisticas (Cicpc), said that there are at least five kidnappings per week in Caracas and those are only the cases that are reported. He added the length of time kidnapers keep their victims has also increased. He also said that kidnapping had increased by 20% in the countryside over the previous 150 days and by 10% in

Caracas over the same period. The areas in the countryside where the most cases have been reported were Los Valles del Tuy, Charallave and Altos Mirandinos. (*Griffin Underwriting – Security Update, June 4, 2017*)

**Venezuela:** Amid elevated levels of political instability, security agencies conducted several operations across the country to rescue kidnap victims during the reporting period. On June 1, members of the Guatire municipal police, Miranda state, rescued two people that were held in their home by members of a local kidnap gang. Police broke into the residence when the perpetrators were still coordinating the victims' transfer to a different location. According to official reports, three suspects involved in the incident were arrested. However, reports of human rights violations during anti-kidnap operations continue to emerge in Venezuela. Since October 2016, when a new stage in the anti-crime Operation LIBERATION AND PROTECTION OF THE PEOPLE was implemented, NGOs have reported an increase in the number of human rights violations occurring during anti-kidnap operations. (*NYA International – Global Kidnap Report, June 2017*)