



THE INKERMEN GROUP



## KIDNAP & RANSOM MONTHLY REVIEW

MARCH 2013

The Inkerman Kidnap & Ransom Monthly Summary provides an informative assessment of kidnap and extortion trends, broken down by region, to provide an overview of the global risk of being targeted for kidnap.

Also available: Inkerman Kidnap & Ransom Daily Bulletin  
Inkerman Political Risk & Security Review  
Inkerman MENA Examiner

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GLOBAL OVERVIEW

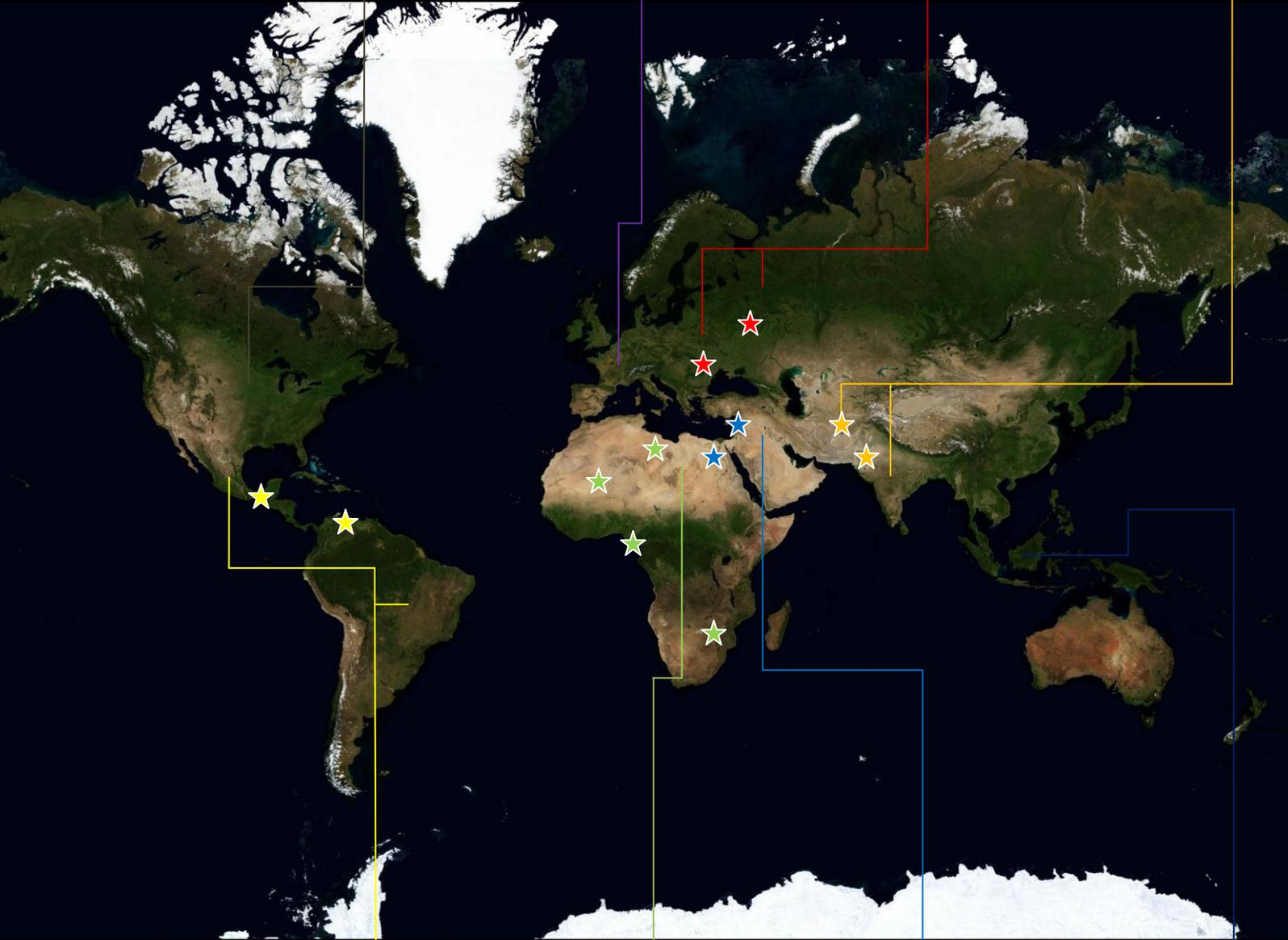
**RISK LEVEL**  
 ↑ Increased  
 ↓ Reduced  
 — Unchanged

**NORTH AMERICA**  
 RISK LEVEL: LOW ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: USA / Mexico border

**WESTERN EUROPE**  
 RISK LEVEL: LOW ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: N/A

**EASTERN EUROPE**  
 RISK LEVEL: MODERATE ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: Dagestan, Chechnya, Turkey, Ukraine

**CENTRAL ASIA**  
 RISK LEVEL: VERY HIGH ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: Pakistan, Afghanistan, India



**LATIN AMERICA**  
 RISK LEVEL: VERY HIGH ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: Mexico, Colombia, Honduras

**AFRICA**  
 RISK LEVEL: VERY HIGH ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: West Africa, Nigeria, Sudan, Sahel region

**MIDDLE EAST**  
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: Yemen, Egypt, Iraq, Gaza Strip, Syria

**ASIA-PACIFIC**  
 RISK LEVEL: HIGH ↑  
 AREAS OF RISK: Philippines, Indonesia

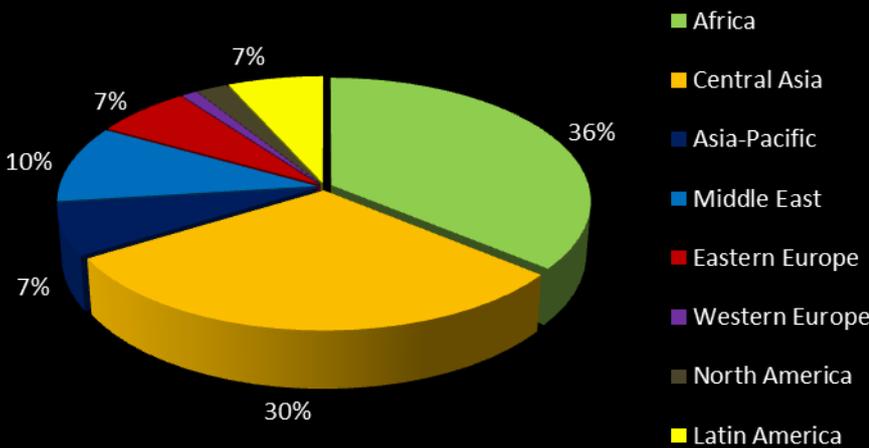
**SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**

- ★ China, 01/03/13, Family kidnap and murder
- ★ Pakistan, 05/03/13, Senior politician taken
- ★ Libya, 07/03/13 – Tripoli airport incident
- ★ Egypt, 08/03/13 – Exxon employee taken
- ★ Nigeria, 11/03/13 – Hostages executed
- ★ Syria, 12/03/13 – Ukrainian escaped
- ★ Ukraine, 13/03/13 – British released
- ★ Russia, 15/03/13 – Classroom siege
- ★ Zimbabwe, 18/03/13 – Gov minster
- ★ Mali, 20/03/13 – French execution claim
- ★ Guatemala, 20/03/13 – Village elders
- ★ Venezuela, 22/03/13 – Taxi drive freed

## STATISTICS AND TRENDS

There follows a graphical representation and analysis of kidnap trends extrapolated from the Inkerman Kidnap & Ransom Daily Bulletin. It should be considered that the data makes no qualitative differentiation between kidnap events, and that local incidents are included alongside foreign and expatriate victims. Many kidnaps also go unreported, thus the data below should be interpreted as a guide only.

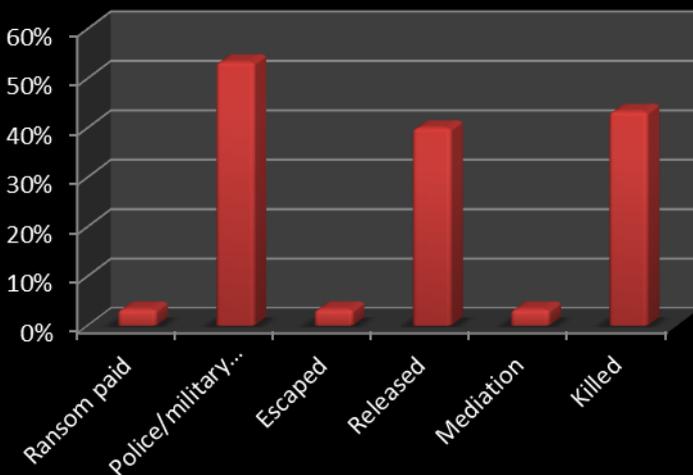
### KIDNAP BREAKDOWN BY REGION



### REGIONAL TRENDS

In a worrying development, all eight regions experienced an increased in incidents recorded by the Inkerman Group during March 2013. Africa dominated the statistics with a total of thirty-two kidnapping incidents recorded. This was followed by Central Asia, which was home to twenty-seven attacks, the majority of which were found in India and Pakistan.

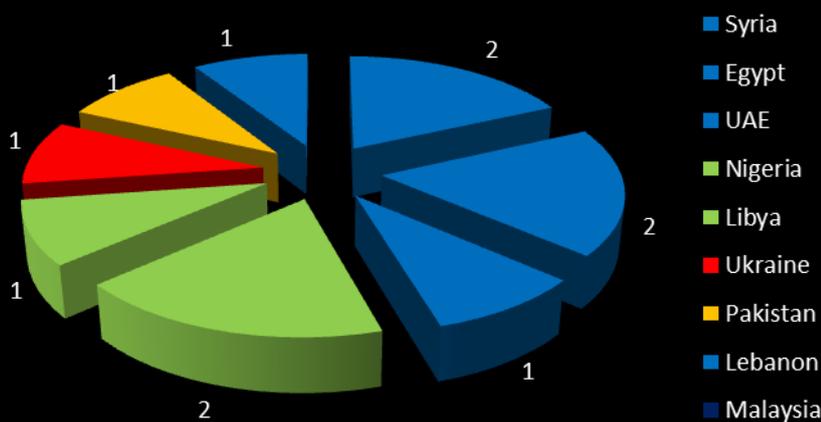
### KIDNAP RESOLUTION BY VICTIM



### KIDNAP RESOLUTIONS

There were a total of forty-four resolutions recorded by the Inkerman Group during March 2013. As is often the case 'Police / Military Action' was the main resolution, however, in a concerning trend there was a noticeable increase in the number of abductions that resulted in the death of the hostage. It appears this have particularly been driven by a number of high-profile executions taking place in the Sahel and Maghreb regions of Africa.

### INCIDENTS OF FOREIGNERS KIDNAPPED



### EXPATRIATE WATCH

Whilst all incidents of kidnappings are obviously serious, those involving foreign nationals are particularly relevant to business travellers as they clearly pose a greater risk. A total of nine countries saw kidnap incidents which involved foreign nationals, once again highlighting the danger that travelling to certain parts of the world can pose to business travellers. Although many of the places listed are often home to such attacks, there a number of countries, including Ukraine and Malaysia, which are less commonly associated with the kidnap of foreign nationals.

## LATIN AMERICA

The major perpetrators of kidnap for ransom are drug cartels and other organised criminal organisations, motivated by profit, or by a political incentive. However, the vast majority of kidnaps are not reported, both for fear of reprisals and for fear of the authorities, many of whom are perceived to be corrupt. This is particularly the case in Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela. This makes it difficult to document, and to ultimately combat this crime in the region.

Despite the lack of comprehensive statistics and the subsequent difficulty in providing an accurate image of the situation, kidnapping continues to pose a considerable threat to all operating in Latin America. Although the vast majority of cases remain unreported, incidents this month were recorded in Mexico, Argentina, Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela and Paraguay. The scope of the countries involved continues to indicate the persistency of the threat throughout the region.

As kidnapping for ransom remains a central source of revenue for both high profile organised gangs and low-level criminal groups throughout Latin America, victims perceived to be financially affluent or relatives of such individuals are often specifically targeted. In Argentina, The Inkerman Group recorded the abduction of two businessmen on 26 March 2013 after leaving a nightclub in Buenos Aires. Although family members reported that they had not received any ransom requests, their release two days later is believed to have nevertheless followed some form of financial exchange. In a similar incident in Venezuela, a taxi driver was abducted and released following the payment of ransom equating to approximately US\$2,400. Interestingly, abductions for monetary profit are largely directed towards locals.

### AREAS OF RISK

#### VERY HIGH

Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, Guatemala

#### HIGH

Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador

#### MODERATE

Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Panama, French Guiana, Costa Rica

Elsewhere, highlighting the criminalised environment in Mexico and the increasing use of kidnapping as a source of financial revenue, 104 Central American immigrants were successfully rescued in a military raid on 10 March 2013, following their abduction four days earlier. Whilst no comments have been made regarding the intentions of the victims to enter the US, the abduction of migrants attempting to cross the border and the subsequent demand of a monetary ransom for their release from relatives, is common in the region. The extent of this case and the amount of individuals involved further points towards the increasing institutionalisation of the kidnapping business in Mexico.

While most cases continue to be carried out solely for financial profit, kidnapping in Latin America is further increasingly being used as a political tool. In a prominent incident in Jalapa, Guatemala, four parliamentarian elders (including a mayor of a nearby village) were abducted the evening of 17 March 2013. Whilst three of the kidnap victims either managed to escape or were successfully released following police action, the last individual was later found dead. The kidnap and murder is the latest sign of the increasing lawlessness in the area. According to reports, the case is directly connected to local disputes over the scheduled expansion of mining projects in the region. Perhaps most concerning have been allegations that abduction followed direct orders from Amildo Morales, the Deputy for Jalapa and a member of the Guatemalan Patriot Party.

## AFRICA

There is a considerable threat of kidnap against foreigners and business personnel across the continent, and security provisions are often necessary to mitigate this risk, especially along the poorly policed Sahara desert. North Africa and the greater Sahel proved to be exceptionally high-risk areas for abductions in March 2013.

Personnel are reminded that the majority of kidnaps in Africa go unreported and continue to be conducted by local people against fellow citizens.

### AREAS OF RISK

#### VERY HIGH

Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Algeria, Somalia, Libya, Kenya (border region), DRC, Cameroon, Eritrea, Sudan, Chad, South Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, coastal regions off the Indian Ocean

#### HIGH

Benin, Togo, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda

#### MODERATE

Guinea, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, South Africa, CAR, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Djibouti

As is always the case, Africa proved to be a hotspot for incidents of abduction in March 2013, with the Maghreb and wider Sahel region, in particular, presenting a considerable risk for both local citizens and foreign nationals.

To begin with, as predicted by The Inkerman Group, French citizens and assets remained high-profile targets as a result of Paris' decision to intervene in Mali's restive north, as underscored by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)'s grisly announcement on 10 March 2013, that it had beheaded Philippe Verdon. In a gruesome telephone call to a Mauritanian news agency on 20 March 2013, an unidentified AQIM spokesman confirmed that his Islamist militant organisation had "beheaded" Verdon in retaliation for the French-led intervention in northern Mali. Worryingly, the threat of abductions and murders which target French citizens is likely to continue, as reports suggest that AQIM currently has at least fourteen French hostages. Going forward, it is believed that AQIM may look to use these hostages as a bargaining chip to persuade French leaders to either "come to their senses" and end their Mali campaign, or "pay off" militant leaders, given that Parisian Government has previously been accused of paying ransom demands in order to secure the release of its nationals.

Elsewhere in the region, the Maghreb also served as a focal point for hostage-taking, as underscored by yet another macabre series of events which have unfolded in Algeria. According to local news outlets, Algerian citizens are growing increasingly concerned about the spate of abductions targeting children, with a staggering 276 children missing as a result of kidnaps in 2012. Making matters worse, 2013 shows no signs of improvement for the safety of children. To that end, authorities confirmed that six-year old Sana'a Boukleikha was found murdered on 14 March 2013, in the city of Sebdu after being abducted by unknown assailants the same day. The incident follows the double kidnap and murder of ten-year-old Haroon Bodayrah and his nine-year-old brother Ibrahim Hashish last week. Authorities in the north-eastern province of Constantine, confirmed that both victims were found murdered near their family home after being raped.

In neighbouring Libya, the abduction problem appears to be far worse. Indeed, The Inkerman Group noted that kidnaps rose by 65% in March 2013, compared to February 2013, with some incidents involving foreign nationals. Egyptians, in particular, are considered a prominent target for armed gangs. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that it is believed that Egyptian nationals are often given jobs which are paid "under the table" to avoid scrutiny from authorities. This has, in turn, led a number of Egyptian migrants to enjoy steady, cash-based income – an attractive target for would-be kidnappers motivated by financial concerns. In addition, there are a number of Egyptian migrants who are Coptic Christian, and face abduction over trumped up charges of proselytisation, an act which is forbidden in Libya. Furthermore, as many Egyptians are living in the country illegally, armed groups often target migrants knowing that the victims are unable to go to authorities for help.

## MIDDLE EAST

The continued deteriorating security situation across the Middle East, in particular, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon, is having a demonstrable impact on the levels of kidnapping. Cross border kidnapping raids are occurring from Syria into Lebanon. Meanwhile, AQAP gains strength in the south of Yemen using kidnap and ransom as tools to fulfil its aim of an Islamic caliphate. Elsewhere, the trend of Bedouin targeting tourists to gain political incentives continues, in Sinai.

### AREAS OF RISK

#### VERY HIGH

Egypt, Syria, Yemen (east, south and Saudi border), Lebanon.

#### HIGH

Iraq, Gaza Strip, Iran

#### MODERATE

Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Kuwait

The Middle East witnessed an increase in kidnaps this month seeing thirteen incidents in Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, the UAE and Iraq - a sharp rise from the previous month's eleven incidents. In Yemen a Swiss hostage kidnapped in March 2012 in al Hudaydah governorate, was released after the Qatari Government paid a US\$930,000 ransom for her release.

A wave of tit-for-tat sectarian kidnappings is taking place in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, specifically around the towns of Arsal and Harbta, in north-east Lebanon, which in March 2013 alone has seen ten people being kidnapped in matters which are born out of the Syrian civil war. The current wave is as a result of the abduction of rival tribesman, for which on 28 March 2013, a US\$1 million ransom was demanded for one man's release. Kidnap for ransom gangs also have strongholds in Beirut's Cite Sportive and Tariq al Jadideh areas, but most incidents remain in the east of the country, illustrated by the seizure of a factory owner in Baalbek, as well as the attempted kidnap of the head of Lebanon's Agricultural Research Institute outside Zahle. However, the Sunni-led March 14 political movement backing the Syrian rebels, while the powerful Shi'ite movement Hezbollah backing of Damascus, provide the main drivers in the current uptick.

In Syria, the kidnap and ransom capital of the region, an unknown number of Armenian nationals were kidnapped in the Shayef region of Aleppo, whilst twenty-one UN observers, were kidnapped close to Israel in the Golan Heights. The observers were held for four days by Syrian rebels who asked the UN to pressure Damascus to withdraw government forces from Jamlah, in an incident which has split the rebel movement. Meanwhile, in an end to the kidnap saga surrounding Ukrainian journalist Anhar Kochneva, she allegedly escaped her captors on 11 March 2013, after being held for five months in Aleppo for taking a pro-Assad stance in her journalism.

Elsewhere, the fluctuating trend of kidnapping foreign 'tourists' in Egypt's Sinai region, continued with the seizure of four people, a married British couple in one incident and an Arab Israeli and a Norwegian woman in another. Both occurred in the south of the peninsula and all four were freed after only being held for a few days in the most extreme case, but both incidents were again carried out by armed Bedouin tribesmen. In the case of the British pair, the victims were later identified as Exxon Mobil's in-country Chairman and Managing Director of Operations and his wife, taken as they stopped to change money in Ras Sudr, South Sinai en-route to Sharm el Sheikh. In the case of the other couple, driving between the resort towns of Dahab and Taba on the Red Sea coast, the pair were transferred to the Maghara district of Northern Sinai to avoid detection and marked the first event of an Israeli national being kidnapped. The Inkerman Group considers the Sinai to be one of the most kidnap-prone areas in the world as it continues to experience a chronic security vacuum since the 2011 uprising. Foreign nationals continue to be perceived as high-value bargaining tools for negotiations with the authorities over perceived injustices, typically the imprisonment or detention of fellow tribesmen, over drug charges or weapons smuggling. In most cases victims are released after a few hours or days of being abducted without being hurt.

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