

Changing Tactics & Motives

Kidnapping of Foreigners in Yemen 2010-2014

A study conducted by **Safer Yemen**
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Note to journalists

This is an open source report and journalists who wish to use the data and information presented in the report can do so; however, Safer Yemen strongly encourage journalists to carefully consider how information is being presented and to do so in a way that does not contribute to generating further risk or escalation in kidnappings. Also, Safer Yemen encourages journalists covering kidnapping cases in Yemen to consider the safety and security of victims in captivity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 2010 to March 2014 there have been 47 realised kidnapping cases and more than 76 foreign victims held by kidnapers in Yemen. The country has witnessed a dramatic increase in kidnappings in this period, going from only one incident in 2010 to 19 in 2013, the highest number of incidents recorded in one year since the kidnapping of foreigners started in Yemen in the late-1980s.

The kidnappings in Yemen can be broken down into three different types: tribal, political and criminal. Each type involves a distinct set of perpetrators, motives and tactics; however, in the past three years these have often overlapped and the actors and motives of a kidnapping are often blurred. Prior to 2011, almost all kidnappings were tribal, with only one case of criminal kidnapping and very few political kidnappings. Post-2011, most kidnappings have been criminal and political and with high impact due to increased levels of violence, prolonged captivity, ill-treatment of victims and complex negotiations.

There are a number of reasons behind this trend, which have emerged from the political crisis in 2011 and the subsequent political transition. First, the Yemeni state's capacity to provide security throughout the country has been severely restricted since 2011. Second, in parallel to tribal kidnappings in rural areas, a new form of criminal and political kidnappings in urban centres has emerged in recent years and has specifically targeted the international community and served as a political pressure tool. Third, the lack of political, legal or military consequences for kidnapers has inspired more actors to get involved. Fourth, the payment of high ransoms in several high-profile kidnapping cases involving European citizens has contributed to a perception that kidnapping is a highly lucrative activity.

Victims, perpetrators and profiling

It is a common perception that European nationalities are the main targets of kidnappings in Yemen; however, Europeans only make up about a third of kidnapping victims, roughly the same number as Middle Eastern nationalities. The last third consists of mixed nationalities; Asian, African and American.

When examining the profession of victims of kidnapping, private sector employees comprise 37% of all victims, whereas humanitarian/development workers make up 30% and diplomats 18%. The remaining 15% of kidnapping cases is split between student/tourists and journalists. In the category of humanitarian/development there have been a total of 20 attempted and realised kidnapping incidents from 2011-2014, out of which four kidnappings were tribal and 16 incidents had political dimensions. In 17 of the cases the victims worked for either UN agencies or large and well-established INGOs with security plans and operating procedures in place. In all of these 17 cases the victims maintained a high profile and moved in typical INGO/UN vehicles, such as white Land Cruisers or vehicles with white licence plates.

All of the kidnapping victims in Sana'a fall into two categories: either the victims maintained a high-profile, often through the use of high-profile vehicles, or the victims were easy targets, meaning they were moving by foot and with established routines and patterns, e.g. going to the same shops or restaurants or regularly moving to their office at fixed hours and using the same route.

The moment of capture, timings and locations

Traditionally, most kidnappings in Yemen have occurred in rural areas; however, there has been a significant shift since 2011 to an increase in incidents in urban centres. Almost 40% of the kidnappings in Yemen from 2010-2014 were carried out in Sana'a, where the vast majority of foreigners are based.

There have been a total of 36 recorded kidnapping incidents, attempted and realised, in Sana'a from 2010-2014 (March), and all of the incidents occurred while the victims were moving, either by foot or in a vehicle. Among the victims classified as easy targets over 80% were kidnapped while they were walking, whereas the majority of the high-profile victims were kidnapped while driving.

Within Sana'a a number of kidnapping hot-spots have been identified: 1) the outskirts of the Old City, including the Saila, Tahrir Square and Zubairi Street; 2) the political neighbourhood, including Algeria, Baghdad and Amman Street; and 3) Hadda area. These areas share some common features: they contain busy main roads, are close to access roads out of the city, and have a number of locations that are frequented by foreigners, including supermarkets, restaurants and cafes. In addition, a number of organisations have their offices and residences in these areas; therefore, they contain a high concentration of foreigners.

There have been increased levels of violence against victims who try to resist or escape during the moment of capture; of the 36 kidnapping incidents in Sana'a from 2010-2014, seven have involved violence against the victims, including shooting directly at victims trying to resist/escape, and four of these incidents have led to fatalities. Furthermore, in all cases where the victim had armed protection, in the form of close protection (CP) officers or police/security force escort, the kidnapping attempt resulted in fatalities of the victim(s) and/or their protection. Only one fatality has occurred during a kidnapping attempt in which there was no reported armed CP.

Period of captivity, negotiation and release

Traditionally, victims of kidnapping in Yemen have been treated well during captivity due to strong tribal norms; however, with the shift to political and criminal kidnappings there is a growing trend of victims being treated worse than previously, including the making of hostage videos and threats of killing the victim if ransoms are not met. In addition, political/criminal kidnappings on average last 40 times as long as tribal kidnappings; 200 days compared to five days. This requires significant costs and is one of the reasons victims are increasingly being sold on to other groups, such as AQAP.

In most of the kidnapping cases, including political/criminal incidents, the victims are released through a mediator, and there are often multiple mediators involved in a single case, ranging from local mediators to high-level political actors in Yemen and international organisations and governments.

Tribal kidnapping is usually solved when the perceived violation of the tribe's rights are restored, e.g. by the government releasing prisoners, delivering jobs or building infrastructure. While in political/criminal kidnappings the payment of ransoms has become an established procedure for the release of victims. However, the payment of ransoms is a highly unsustainable solution and is a significant contributing factor in driving further kidnappings, including criminal copycat kidnappings. Despite a number of international initiatives to halt such payments there is no evidence it has stopped.

Future threats

Kidnappers have displayed a high capacity to adapt their tactics to the changing mitigation measures of the international community in Yemen and this evolution is likely to continue in a number of potential ways. First, violence associated with kidnapping attempts has the potential to increase further, especially if the use of armed escorts becomes common practice among members of the international community or if state security forces begin to intervene in order to rescue victims during the moment of capture/transportation. In addition, a risk exists of violence against victims in captivity increasing as well as the potential killing of victims, for example, if ransom demands are not met or as a political statement. Second, it is likely that kidnappers in the future will increasingly try to capture their victims from residences (there has been only one confirmed incident to date), either by breaking into them or when the victims are entering/exiting. Third, an increase in criminal copycat kidnappings is likely due to a general increase in crime and a break-down in social and traditional norms across Yemen combined with common perceptions of very high ransom payments and low legal consequences.

Mitigating the risk

Kidnapping remains one of the main security concerns for foreigners in Yemen; however, very few traditional security measures, e.g. armoured vehicles, curfews and armed protection, have proven effective when trying to mitigate the kidnapping risk in a Yemeni context. Whereas these measures might be utilised to mitigate other threats they cannot stand alone as kidnapping mitigation, which instead requires flexible and pro-active security plans and investments in training and capacity building of staff in order to establish a culture of security. These mitigation measures should be designed according to the risk dynamics in the current Yemeni context and require staff buy-in that they are responsible for security, not only for themselves, but also for others within their organisation, their organisation's operations, and the wider international community.

This study identified six effective mitigation strategies, which when used in combination have a significant mitigating effect, meanwhile also being very cost-effective as they do not require huge security budgets or resources to implement. In addition, the identified strategies are sustainable in that they do not contribute to an escalation in the violence associated with kidnappings. The strategies include the following guidelines: avoid walking; maintain a low-profile approach, including vehicles; vary routes and timings and limit circles of information; minimise exposure in public and avoid hot-spot areas; ensure that guards, drivers and staff are trained in counter-surveillance; and ensure background screening of staff and implement a mechanism for "safe" reporting of extortion.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines the kidnapping of foreigners in Yemen from 2010 to 2014 with the aim of creating an understanding of how tactics and motives have changed and shaped the kidnapping risk and to initiate discussion on how to best mitigate the risk in a sustainable way that does not contribute to further escalation in the threat. The report builds on extensive research into underlying dynamics, involved actors, their motives and modus operandi. Kidnapping as a phenomenon has evolved significantly in recent years and become increasingly blurred with overlapping actors and motives; therefore, this reports focus on discussing trends and patterns rather than examining individual cases.

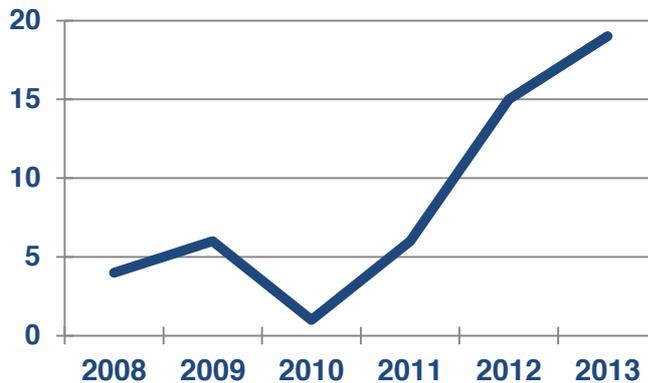
From 2010 to 2014 (March) there have been 47 realised kidnapping cases and more than 76 foreign victims held by kidnappers in Yemen. The level of kidnappings witnessed in 2013 is the highest number of incidents recorded in one year since kidnapping of foreigners started in Yemen in the late 1980's and is only resembled by a peak in kidnappings in 1997, where 18 cases, all tribal, were recorded in one year. In addition to the dramatic increase in the number of kidnappings, recent years have witnessed a shift to political and criminal kidnappings with a much higher impact than traditional tribal kidnappings. When looking beyond the numbers there are several factors that in combination have contributed to the increase in kidnappings and the shift from tribal to political and criminal cases.

First, with the political crisis in 2011 and the subsequent political transition process, the Yemeni state capacity in providing security has been severely restricted. The Yemeni security forces were significantly impacted by the political crisis and have since undergone far-reaching institutional reforms, a process that remains unsettled and has sparked significant levels of intra-institutional conflict. The restricted capacity of state security services has generated a security vacuum felt across society and in

urban areas anecdotal evidence suggests it has generated increased levels of crime, ranging from petty crime to organised robberies. Among other incidents, criminal kidnapping of Yemenis for ransom demands also appear to have increased significantly and includes kidnapping of children of businessmen. No reliable statistics exist on kidnappings of Yemenis and therefore it has not been included in this report; however, the phenomenon appears to be increasing and similar to kidnapping of foreigners there has been a development from purely tribal to also include political and criminal kidnappings.

Second, in parallel to tribal kidnappings in rural areas a new form of political kidnappings in urban centres has emerged in recent years and has very specifically targeted the international community. Many of the politically motivated kidnapping cases have been linked to the political transition process and the involvement of foreign countries and organisations in overseeing the implementation of the political agreement signed in 2011, also known as the GCC mechanism. This includes a targeting of specific nationalities and organisations in what appears to be aimed at intimidation or putting political pressure related to either spoiling or as a means of positioning. The targeting of the international community has occurred concurrently with a dramatic increase in the political influence held by international countries in Yemen and their leverage to pressure Yemeni power elites into following a certain political path.

**Kidnapping of foreigners
2008-2013**



Third, the Yemeni transitional government has not taken any effective steps to mitigate or condemn the rise in kidnappings and therefore none of the kidnappers involved in recent kidnapping incidents have faced political, legal or military consequences. On the contrary, the kidnappings have publicly been met with silence from the Yemeni government, which has failed to counter a growing perception that kidnapping is an accepted type of criminality and that kidnappers enjoy a level of impunity.

Fourth, very high ransoms have been paid in several high-profile kidnapping cases involving European victims and whereas these have not been paid directly by the European countries, but instead through intermediary states, e.g. Qatar and Oman, they have nonetheless contributed to a perception that kidnapping is a highly lucrative type of crime. This is likely to have inspired criminal copy-cat kidnappings purely motivated by a ransom demand. Also, significant amounts have been paid to the mediators in the kidnapping cases, making the business of being a mediator almost as lucrative as the kidnappings themselves and perhaps adding a further incentive to an already complex political, tribal and criminal enterprise.

Methodology & Disclaimer

This report was written in April 2014, but builds on years of extensive research into the various types of kidnappings in Yemen, including qualitative interviews with victims of kidnapping, individuals involved in kidnapping, security experts and other people with knowledge on the topic as well as existing literature written about kidnappings in Yemen. In addition, data has been collected on each reported kidnapping case since 2010; however, such data can never be completely verified as there are no official records on kidnapping, but information instead has been collected through open sources, anecdotal evidence, eye witnesses, victims, their employers and embassies. Therefore, the statistics presented in this report should be taken as illustrations of trends; despite efforts to cross check all incidents unknown factors still remain.

The objective of this study is to analyse trends and patterns in the kidnappings in Yemen, especially the more political and criminal kidnappings that have emerged in recent years and targeted internationals in urban centres. Due to the sensitivity of the topic no names of organisations or victims are mentioned in relation to the presented case studies. The report aims to equip international actors in Yemen with a better understanding of the kidnapping dynamics specific to the current security context and discuss the most effective strategies in mitigating the risk. Although this report provides recommendations companies and organisations always need to develop their own security plans and procedures specific to the risk faced by their staff and operations. None of the advice on mitigation strategies presented in this report can replace specific risk assessments and tailored security plans.

This study includes both realised kidnappings and attempted kidnappings, and “kidnapping incident” refers to data including both attempted and realised cases. In addition, all graphs presents number of kidnapping cases, as opposed to the number of victims in each incident, with the exception of the charts in Chapter 3 illustrating nationality and work of victims.

As the phenomenon is complex and growing this report is limited to assessing kidnappings defined as one or more persons held against their will and by perpetrators making a demand in exchange for their release. Abduction, hostage-taking, human trafficking, detention and other types of forced capture are not included in this study.

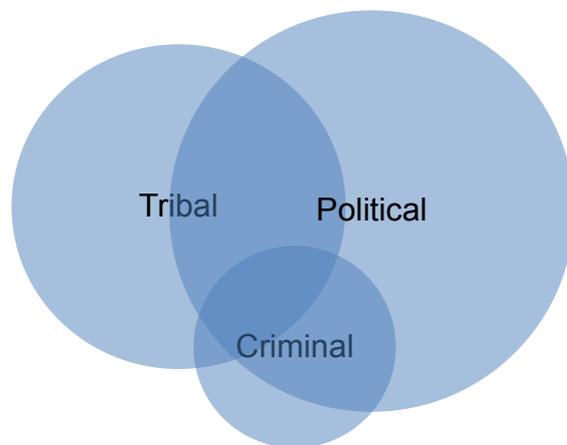
Kidnapping of Yemenis is a phenomenon that has undergone similar developments as kidnapping of foreigners, including dramatic increase in incidents and a shift from tribal to more complex criminal and political cases. It is therefore a worrying and growing security concern and should be assessed and researched in further detail; however, it has not been included in this study due to lack of accurate and available information.

2. TYPES OF KIDNAPPINGS

There are three types of kidnappings in Yemen: tribal, political and criminal. Each category of kidnapping involves a distinct set of perpetrators, motives and modus operandi (*see Table 1 below*); however, in the past three years these have often overlapped and actors and motives of a kidnapping are often blurred. It is not uncommon that a kidnapping starts out as being criminal, but later evolves into a political case or that a politically motivated kidnapping is carried out under a tribal “cover”. Yet, despite the overlapping motives and actors, examining which category a kidnapping belongs to is still essential when trying to establish how the victim was selected, how the group capturing the victim operated and how the case can be negotiated; all crucial aspects in mitigating the risk and managing the incident when a kidnapping occurs.

Tribal Kidnappings as Norm

Tribal kidnappings of foreigners began as a phenomenon in Yemen in the late 1980’s; however, tribal kidnapping had long roots prior to this and served as a regulated mechanism within tribal customary law related to conflict resolution. Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s tribal kidnapping of foreigners, often tourists, but also development workers, students, diplomats and private sector employees, became very widespread, but had a limited impact as victims were well-treated in accordance with tribal norms and viewed as “forced” guests of the tribe more than kidnapping victims.



Tribal kidnappings is as a pre-condition based on a specific grievance, and in order for the kidnapping to be categorised as tribal the tribe as a whole has to accept collective responsibility for the action of the kidnappers. A kidnapping is viewed as a last resort when trying to solve a conflict, e.g. a business dispute or a grievance against the government, and even when carried out in accordance with tribal norms it is still viewed as a shameful act within tribal customary law. The victim is selected based on their suitability to put pressure on a third party and is viewed as a pressure mechanism rather than a targeted individual. Therefore, a random tourist might be kidnapped by a tribe in order to put pressure on the government in a specific conflict, e.g. a state development dispute. The victim serves the purpose of forcing the government into negotiations, also through pressure added by the victim’s embassy, and is usually not selected because of any direct affiliation to the conflict.

Up until 2011 almost all kidnappings in Yemen were tribal with the exception of one criminal case in the 1990’s and a few politically motivated cases, including the Aden-Abyan Army kidnapping of 16 tourists in 1998, a case which ended with high fatality figures, when the kidnappers used the victims as human shields in a gun battle with state security forces during a rescue operation. Between 2011 to 2014 there have been kidnapping cases in which tribesmen have been involved in capturing victims in otherwise criminal and/or political kidnappings, but the involvement of tribesmen is not enough to categorise a case as tribal if the case is not in other aspects, such as following tribal norms for legitimate grievance, selection of victim, non-violent capture, good treatment and open negotiations (*see more in Table 1 below*).

Post-2011: Criminal and Political Kidnappings Emerge

Prior to 2011 only one case of a criminal kidnapping and very few political kidnappings had taken place in Yemen. The criminal case was an opportunistic kidnapping carried out by a loose criminal group in a rural area and the political cases that had occurred were mostly related to isolated incidents of militant Islamic groups carrying out kidnappings, e.g. the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army kidnapping of 16 tourists in 1998. Both in the criminal case and the political incidents the government reaction was rapid and strong. Therefore, neither criminal nor political kidnappings were widespread prior to 2011, but in a country where kidnapping of foreigners had almost become institutionalised the potential for both political and criminal kidnapping to emerge was high. Well-established social norms and absent political motive were among the preventive factors that changed as the political and social crisis in 2011 evolved and opened up a space for new types of kidnappings to emerge.

The new type of political kidnappings that emerged after the political crisis in 2011 differed from previous political cases by involving political power elites and being motivated by the political involvement of certain countries and organisations in Yemen's political crisis and political transition. A variety of elite actors became involved in staging kidnappings by pre-selecting victims (often due to nationality or employment affiliation) and paying organised criminal groups to capture the victims and transfer them to AQAP or organised criminal groups for prolonged periods of captivity and maximum impact. Therefore, the political motive in the kidnappings goes beyond the motives of religious extremist groups and instead involves national, regional and international political agendas, in which the kidnappings have served as a pressure tool and means of intimidation.

CASE 1: Kidnapping as Political Pressure Tool

In 2011, three European citizens were kidnapped in Hadramawt and held by alleged members of AQAP for approximately five months. Although AQAP was the group believed to have held the victims the motive of the kidnapping related to the political involvement of the victims' home country in the political uprising in Yemen. Placing the victims with AQAP was done to maximise impact and put pressure on the victims' embassy and government and was therefore purely instrumental. The negotiations in the case were prolonged and complex and were finally solved through ransom payment by an intermediary state, which later became common practice in other kidnapping cases.

Criminal groups have been highly instrumental in this type of political kidnapping and have often been the perpetrators hired to carry out the kidnapping operation itself (capture and transport) and in some cases also holding the victims, illustrating the overlap between political and criminal kidnappings (see more in the following section). Only in very few cases have criminal groups operated to carry out a kidnapping on their own initiative, but emerging criminal copy-cat kidnapping inspired by high ransoms paid in other cases and lack of legal consequences imposed by the government is a concern and is likely to increase if the current security vacuum continues.

Shift from tribal to political & criminal kidnappings 2010-2014

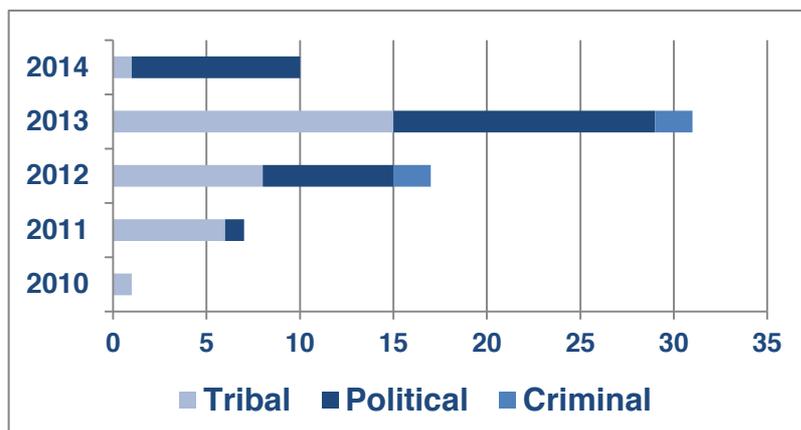


Table 1: Modus Operandi of Tribal, Criminal and Political Kidnapping

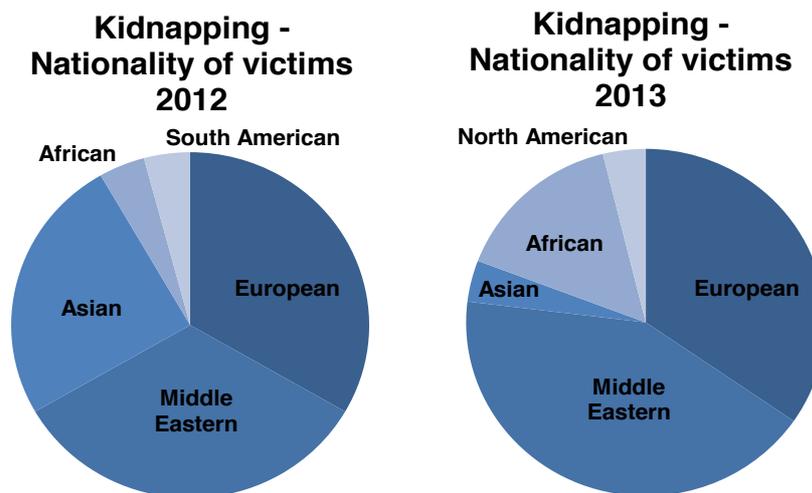
	Perpetrators	Motive	Selection of victim	Location	Method of capture	Captivity	Negotiation & release
Tribal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribesmen, • The tribe holds and accepts collective responsibility for the kidnapping 	<p>Grievance-based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business disputes • Perceived violation of rights • Development or employment claims against government • Justice demands, e.g. release of prisoners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often opportunistic • If pre-selected, rarely individual targeting (however, individual targeting in business disputes) • Women rarely kidnapped alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly in rural areas on main roads; however, will come to cities to look for foreigners if not available in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-violent, but often sophisticated, e.g. trying to “lure” victim(s) into car • If weapons fired then only to the ground or in the air • Stopping vehicle by shooting in air or at fake checkpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short captivity, average 5 days • Victims treated as guests according to customary tribal law • Female victims kept with family or offered release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of victim and demands well known • Government appointed mediators openly negotiate with the tribe • No ransom demand; however, grievance can be financial
Criminal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised criminal groups • Ex-soldiers • Loosely affiliated tribesmen • Loosely organised criminals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely financial, either ransom payment or to make money on capturing and selling the victim to a third party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often opportunistic • Prior profiling and hostile surveillance; however, not specifically targeted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly in cities, but can also occur in rural areas • Kidnappers will often look for victims in areas with many foreigners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat of violence • Arms pointed directly at victim(s) • Victim(s) physically harmed if resisting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims often moved between different locations • Victims are kept isolated • Often roughly treated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged period of captivity • Victims often sold • Complex negotiations • Ransom demands and threats to harm the victim(s)
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlapping • Initiative coming from political power elites; however, operations carried out by criminal groups (see above) and victims often held by AQAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political spoiling • Intimidating international community, either in general or specific country or organisation • Putting political pressure to mark position and strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims specifically targeted, either due to nationality, organisation or individual profile • Hostile surveillance often precedes the kidnapping attempt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly in urban centres and especially Sana’a • A few cases have occurred in other cities, e.g. Taiz, Al-Hudaydah and Sayoun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms pointed directly against victim(s) • Shooting against victim(s) if trying to resist or escape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some cases victims have been treated well, e.g. kept in a village • In other cases victims have been isolated, locked up and treated badly • Threat of violence and victims forced to make hostage videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged period of captivity, average of 199 days • Location of victim unclear and demands shifting • High-level mediation and ransom paid by intermediary countries

3. VICTIMS, PERPETRATORS & PROFILING

Nationality & Work of Victims

It has been a common perception that European nationalities are the main target of kidnappings; however, Europeans in reality only make up about one third of kidnapping victims. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern nationalities make up another third, and in 2013, 45% of all foreigners kidnapped in Yemen were from Middle Eastern countries. This is important to note as there has been a tendency among certain organisations and companies to view staff from regional countries as being at less risk than staff of European or American nationality and therefore sometimes fewer security measures are in place to mitigate the risk. And while Asian nationalities were more frequently kidnapped in 2012 the trend in 2013 shifted to African nationalities, which might partly be explained by an increase in expatriates from Africa working for international organisations, as all African nationals kidnapped in 2013 worked in the development/humanitarian sector. American nationalities have not been widely targeted to date, with only one South American and one North American kidnapped in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

“In 2013, 45% of all foreigners kidnapped in Yemen were from Middle Eastern countries”



Whereas the spectra of targeted nationalities is wider than is commonly assumed there are some differences when the kidnappings are broken down to rural versus urban and tribal versus political/criminal. European citizens have been widely targeted in political/criminal kidnappings in urban centres (see more in following section), whereas Middle Eastern nationalities have been more frequently kidnapped in tribal kidnappings in rural, and often southern, governorates. The exception has been kidnappings of Middle Eastern nationalities related to regional political dynamics; embassy officials from the Saudi Arabian, Iranian, Omani and Qatari embassies have all been targeted in kidnappings in Sana'a in 2012 and 2013, sometimes caused by political motives. All of the African nationalities kidnapped in 2013 were kidnapped in apparent political kidnappings; one incident targeted the organisation of the victim and another targeted the two victims specifically due to their work in an INGO with a strong Christian profile.



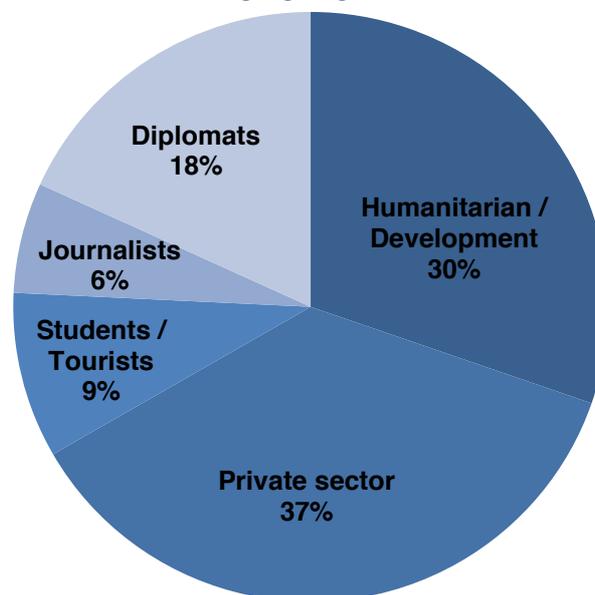
In terms of the profession of victims of kidnapping, private sector employees make up 37% of all victims, humanitarian/development workers make up 30% and diplomats 18%. The remaining 15% of kidnapping cases is split between student/tourists and journalists. When looking within the categories there are wide differences between the victims, e.g. very few private sector employees in urban centres with some level of security have been kidnapped; instead the private sector employees have been largely made up by doctors, often Russian or East European, working at local hospitals across the country. Another significant group of people within the private sector has been drivers working for transportation or tourist companies in southern governorates, who have often been kidnapped in tribal disputes.

“In 17 cases the victims worked for either UN agencies or large and well established INGOs with security plans and operating procedures in place”

In the category of humanitarian/development workers there have been a total of 20 attempted and realised kidnapping incidents from 2011-2014, out of which four kidnappings were tribal and 16 had political dimensions. In three incidents the victim worked for small NGOs without clear security procedures, and of interest is that all three organisations had a clear Christian profile. In the remaining 17 cases the victims worked for either UN agencies or large and well-established INGOs with security plans and operating procedures in place. In all 17

cases involving victims from well-established and large international organisations the victims maintained a high-profile and moved in typical INGO/UN vehicles, such as white Land Cruisers, or vehicles with international licence plates. Seven of the cases occurred outside Sana’a, in rural areas and other cities, whereas the remaining 13 cases occurred inside Sana’a city.

Kidnapping of foreigners by profession 2010-2014

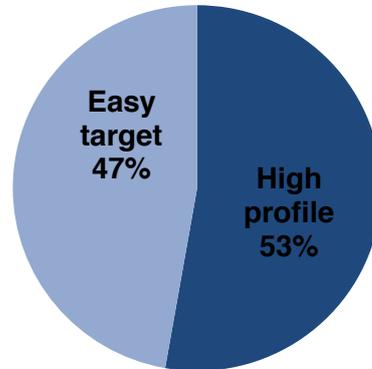


The majority of kidnapping incidents involving diplomats have targeted regional embassies, e.g. Saudi Arabian, Qatari, Iranian and Omani embassies. However, a number of European embassy personnel have also been targeted in kidnapping attempts, including from the Bulgarian, Italian and French embassies. Kidnapping incidents involving diplomatic missions have often been tribal in nature, e.g. related to business disputes, but in a number of cases political motives also played a role.

High-Profile and Easy Targets

When looking at the profile of victims of kidnapping incidents in Sana'a city it is of interest to note that all of the victims fell into one of two categories; either the victims were maintaining a high profile, often through the use of high-profile vehicles, e.g. white Land Cruisers or armoured vehicles, and often with white licence plates (either international organisation or diplomatic mission plates) or the victims were easy targets, meaning that they were often moving by foot and with established routines and patterns, e.g. going to the same shops or restaurants regularly or moving back and forth from work at fixed hours and by using the same route. Most of the victims belonging to the second group were either long-term residents or students/tourists and journalists, whereas diplomatic missions and development/humanitarian workers are comprise most of the high-profile category.

Victim's profiles in Sana'a 2010-2014



Both target groups were therefore highly visible and within both categories the victims often followed established routines, allowing kidnappers to carry out hostile surveillance in advance of kidnapping attempts (see more about targeted versus opportunistic kidnappings in the following sections). None of the victims of either realised kidnapping or kidnapping attempts followed a low-profile strategy combined with basic mitigation measures such as counter-surveillance and varying

“In all cases involving victims from well-established international organisations the victims maintained a high-profile and used typical INGO/UN vehicles”

of timings and routes, which indicates that this strategy is successful in mitigating kidnapping. In late 2013, there was a shift among many actors in the international community to start using armoured vehicles as protection against kidnapping. One of the reasons for this shift was the many kidnapping incidents targeting soft-skin high-profile vehicles; however, the kidnappers quickly adapted and in 2014 to date 44% of the reported kidnapping incidents, attempted and realised, targeted victims moving in armoured vehicles.

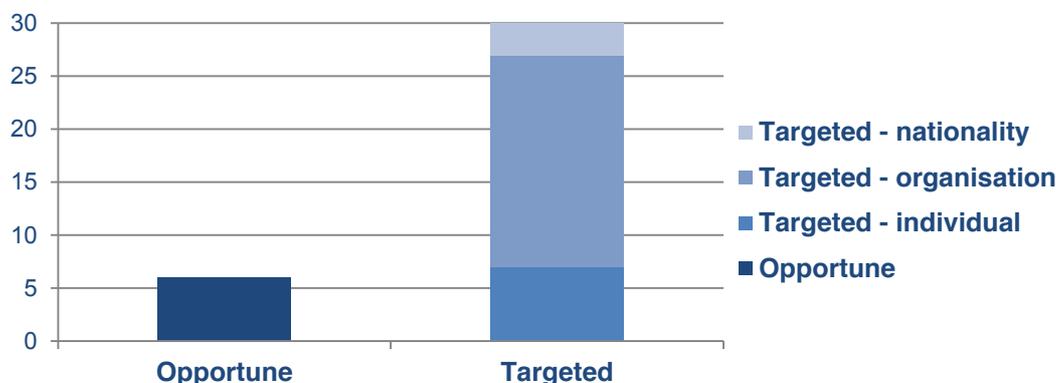
Targeted versus Opportunistic

When kidnappings occur they can often seem random and even opportunistic; however, this is very rarely the case. Instead, most kidnappings are carried out after thorough planning by the kidnappers, and in the majority of cases some level of targeting is taking place. This can be that the victims have been pre-selected and kept under surveillance for a period of time, though there are also cases in which victims are targeted based on appearance, e.g. diplomatic or UN licences plates. In these cases it is the organisation that is the target and the victim is randomly selected.

There are three common forms of targeting: individual targeting, targeting due to nationality and targeting of the organisation. In the first two cases the identity of the victim is already known to the kidnappers and there will often have been a period of hostile surveillance leading up to the moment of capture. The motive to target an individual is often related to the person's work, especially when this is sensitive in a religious or political context. The motive to target a person due to nationality can either relate to business disputes or to regional and/or international political dynamics and perpetrators seeking to target specific countries, often due to their political involvement in Yemen. The same is often the case when a specific organisation and, more rarely, company is the target of a kidnapping. An example is the wave of kidnappings that targeted the United Nations (UN) in early 2014, in which the kidnappers targeted UN vehicles with international staff as a means to target the organisation and most likely without knowing the identity of the victims. The motive was possibly related to a controversial UN Security Council resolution that was issued just prior to the first kidnapping attempt. Examples of targeting of specific nationalities due

to business disputes include the kidnapping of a Saudi diplomat in Sana'a in 2011 and the attempted kidnappings of Bulgarian diplomats in 2012 and 2013, which were all motivated by business disputes.

Targeted versus opportunistic kidnappings in Sana'a (2011-2014)



As illustrated above, there have been very few opportunistic kidnapping cases in Sana'a in recent years. Opportunistic is defined as kidnapping cases where there does not appear to have been any targeting of the victim, other than the victim being a foreigner. In these cases it is difficult to assess whether the kidnapping was planned or completely opportunistic; however, in most of the cases classified as opportunistic some level of pre-planning is likely to have taken place. Opportunistic kidnappings have often been criminal in nature and occurred in areas with high concentration of foreigners, e.g. certain parts of Sana'a including Hadda and in the area around the Old City, where kidnapers have waited for foreigners outside restaurants and supermarkets. However, tribal kidnappings have at times also been opportunistic, e.g. the kidnapping of a humanitarian worker in Lahj in 2011 motivated by a legal dispute between the government and a local tribe.

Perpetrators & Selection of Victims

As discussed in more detail in Chapter one the perpetrators behind the kidnappings and their motives are overlapping and complex in nature and therefore difficult to accurately assess. Whereas perpetrators in traditional kidnappings were tribal and adhered to tribal norms, the new types of political and criminal kidnappings that have emerged since 2011 involve a wide range of actors and overlapping motives. Often cases are initiated by political elites, the operation carried out by criminal groups contracted for the purpose and victims handed over to AQAP to maximise impact. The point at which one group takes over from the other is blurred and differs from case to case; however, for the purpose of mitigation it is important to understand how a kidnapping is initiated and how the victims are selected in the different types of kidnappings.

“The political motive in the kidnappings goes beyond the motives of religious extremist groups and instead involves national, regional and international political agendas, in which the kidnappings have served as a pressure tool and means of intimidation”

In purely tribal kidnappings the victims are selected based on their suitability as a pressure tool against a third party to solve a grievance or dispute. In some cases the victim will be selected because of a specific employment affiliation or nationality (often this is the case in business disputes), but in many cases being a vulnerable foreigner is enough to be selected. This type of kidnappings often occurs in rural areas and often targets available foreigners in the area, e.g. foreigners working for local companies. This type of selection also occurs in cities and targets vulnerable foreigners, also referred to as easy targets. In the past foreigners have been captured at tourist sites; however, as foreigners began to limit visits to tourist locations for security reasons simply walking around the city is enough to be vulnerable to random selection.

In purely criminal kidnappings the pattern is similar to tribal kidnappings in the way that kidnappers often select their victims without prior knowledge of their identity, but based on availability and vulnerability – and sometimes combined with the appearance of the victim, e.g. a high-profile vehicle suggests a high-value target. However, whereas a tribal kidnapping is never fully opportunistic, understood in the way that a legitimate grievance needs to be present and prior planning taking place, criminal kidnappings have often been more opportunistic and less planned. Furthermore, the motive is purely financial and a group of low-level criminals might spontaneously decide to carry out a kidnapping based solely on opportunity. Such cases have occurred in the past and often result in higher risk levels faced by the victim(s) as the operation is not well-planned and the kidnappers often disorganised. Unless carried out by an organised criminal group and preceded by careful planning, most criminal kidnappings will result in the victim quickly being sold on to a third party, once the kidnappers realise how much logistical infrastructure needs to be in place not just for the capture itself, but also the long-term captivity.

CASE 2: The opportunistic kidnapping of a Czech doctor

In 2014, a Czech woman working in a hospital in Sana'a was kidnapped when she was walking close to her home in south Hadda in an area with many restaurants and hotels frequented by foreigners. The woman was released after a couple of hours, reportedly after the kidnappers found out about her nationality and that she was married to a Yemeni. Upon releasing her, the kidnappers tried to extort her for information on more "high-value" foreign targets in Sana'a, suggesting that they were criminals looking to kidnap foreigners for purely financial reasons.

Unless carried out by an organised criminal group and preceded by careful planning, most criminal kidnappings will result in the victim quickly being sold on to a third party, once the kidnappers realise how much logistical infrastructure needs to be in place not just for the capture itself, but also the long-term captivity.

Political kidnappings are the most complex and with the most overlapping actors. It is important to differentiate between the motive, which in this type of kidnappings comes from political actors who initiate the kidnapping, and the actual operation, which is carried out by criminal groups contracted for the task. In political kidnappings the victims are almost always targeted, either individually, due to nationality or organisation and therefore a period of hostile surveillance will often occur before the actual attempt to kidnap. In reported incidents hostile surveillance have sometimes targeted the individual, but more often organisations' residences, offices and vehicles have been targeted in hostile surveillance leading up to kidnapping attempts. The criminal groups therefore play an important instrumental role, but it remains unclear to what extent they participate in the selection of the victim and to what extent the victim has been pre-selected and the criminal groups solely act on orders. Indicators suggest that it varies from case to case, but that the criminal groups acts on some level of instructions, e.g. in regard to nationality or organisation.

The model of transferring the victims to AQAP after capture is designed to maximise impact in political kidnappings, e.g. in the form of increased pressure on the embassies of the victim(s), and is therefore also instrumental. However, it has led to speculation about whether AQAP actively initiates kidnappings, e.g. by instructing criminal groups to carry out kidnappings and/or actively buying victims. Whereas this remains a very likely development in the short to medium term it has not been common to date and there is no evidence suggesting that AQAP has carried out a kidnapping. The role of AQAP is therefore still limited to receiving and holding victims transferred by other actors, though the potential for a more active role remains.

Another trend that has become increasingly common since 2013 is potential kidnappers extorting national staff of organisations and companies for information on foreigners. A high number of cases have been reported during which national staff have either been offered money in return for information or received threats and it is likely that an even higher number of cases are not being reported, due to fear or loss of employment. It is not possible to assess with any certainty how often this type of extortion has informed actual kidnappings; however, in a number of cases there are indicators suggesting that the kidnappers had insider knowledge of the selected victim.

“There is no evidence to suggest that AQAP has carried out a kidnapping in Yemen”

4. MOMENT OF CAPTURE, TIMINGS & LOCATIONS

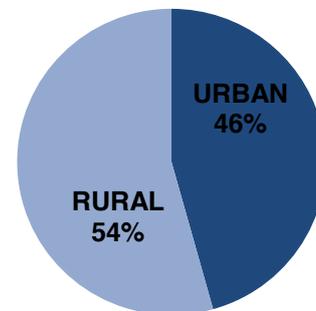
This chapter examines in greater detail the kidnapping incidents in Sana'a, where the majority of the kidnappings have taken place in 2010-2014. This includes examination of hot-spot areas for kidnappings and the different times of day at which they have occurred as well as analysing trends within the moment of capture and the modus operandi of the kidnappers.

Urban versus Rural

Traditionally, most kidnappings in Yemen have occurred in rural areas; however, there has been a significant shift since 2011 to an increase in incidents in urban centres, mainly in Sana'a, but also in Aden, Taiz and Al-Hudaydah. The shift from rural to urban is likely related to the decrease in the number of foreigners travelling to rural areas, with most now flying from city to city rather than driving. This has historically been the case as during periods when foreigners reduced inter-city road movements kidnappers would instead travel to the cities in search of suitable victims.

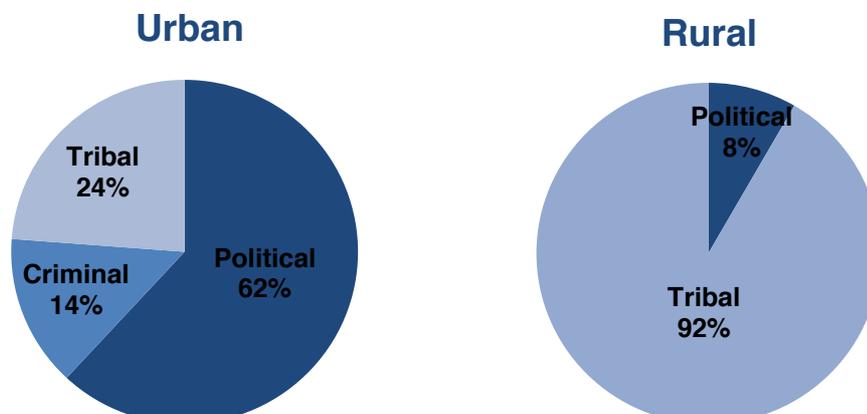
Furthermore, of the 47 total kidnappings in Yemen from 2010-2014 almost 40% were carried out in Sana'a, where the vast majority of foreigners are based, and of the 64 total kidnapping incidents, attempted and realised, 56% were carried out in Sana'a. While for the rural cases, the largest number of kidnappings occurred in Shabwa and Marib, just under 11% in each, followed by Abyan, with 9%.

Location of Kidnappings
2010-2014



There is also a clear difference in the type of kidnappings that have occurred in urban and rural areas, as illustrated in the charts below. The vast majority of the kidnappings in rural areas have been tribal, with a small percentage assessed as having political motives. However, in urban incidents this is the opposite, with the majority of cases being political and only a quarter being tribal, as well as almost a fifth being criminal in nature. Overall, the number of purely criminal cases is low, only 8% of all kidnapping incidents, though, as discussed above, most cases have overlapping motives and involve numerous different actors with different agendas; therefore, most political kidnappings also include a criminal element.

Type of kidnappings by location 2010-2014



Hot-Spot Areas in Sana'a

The map below illustrates the reported locations of attempted (orange) and realised (red) kidnapping incidents in Sana'a since 2011, apart from one incident in October 2013, which occurred in the northern outskirts of the city towards Sana'a International Airport.



When looking at the locations in Sana'a where kidnappings have taken place it is possible to identify a number of geographical hot-spot areas within which most incidents have occurred. These can be defined as: 1) the outskirts of the Old City, including the Saila, Tahrir Square and Zubairi Street; 2) the political neighbourhood, including Algeria, Baghdad and Amman Street; and 3) Hadda area. Within Hadda there are several hot-spot areas: along Hadda Street, South Hadda (near Hadda Post Office) and Hadda Sakania, especially the area around Beirut/Zero Street.

The outskirts of the Old City, Algeria/Baghdad/Amman Street and Hadda as kidnapping hot-spot areas share some common features: they contain busy main roads, are close to access roads out of the city, and have a number of locations that are frequented by foreigners, including supermarkets, restaurants and cafes. In addition, a number of organisations have their offices and residences in these areas; therefore, they contain a high concentration of foreigners.

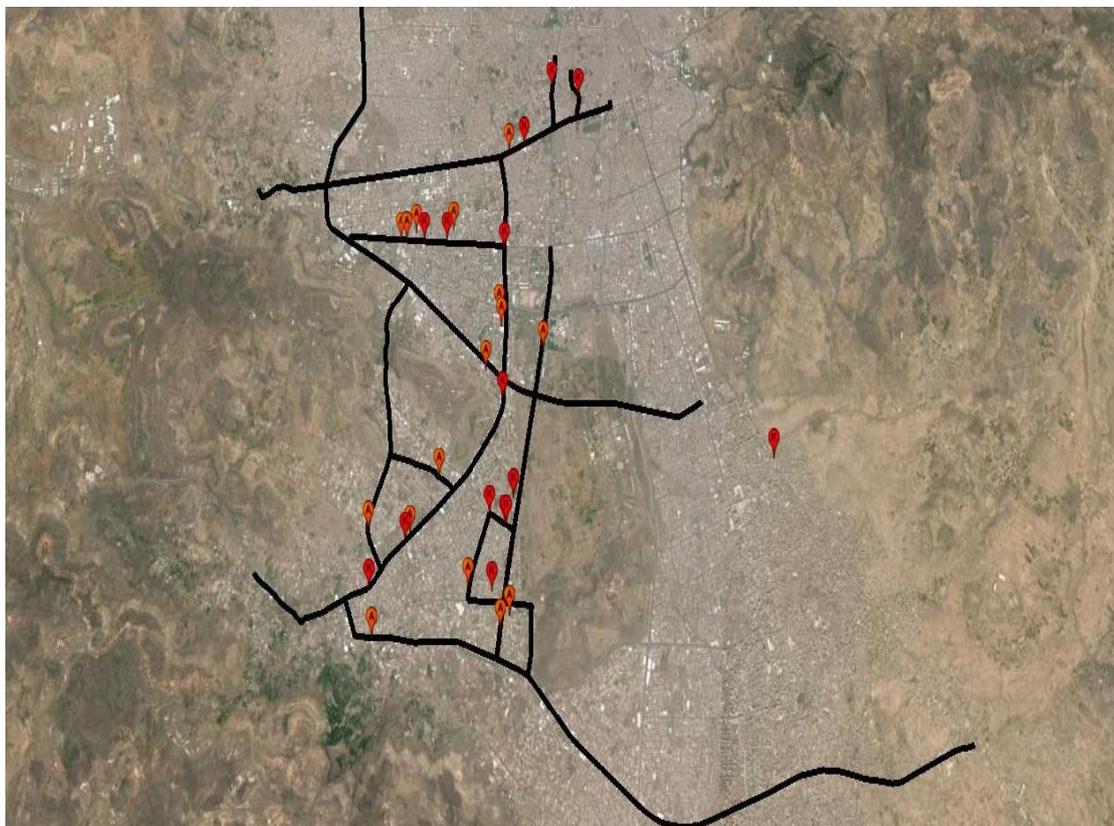
Busy roads: As shown on the map below, the majority of incidents in Sana'a have occurred along the busy main roads of the city, such as Hadda Street, Baghdad/Algeria Street, Zero Street and Zubairi Street, as opposed to the many smaller, quieter back roads or inside residential areas. There are a couple of likely reasons for this trend. First, many foreigners and their drivers feel more comfortable using the main roads in the city when moving between locations and therefore tend to establish very predictable patterns in movements. Secondly, main roads provide better routes for the kidnapers to the exit roads out of the city rather than smaller back-roads. The incidents from recent years illustrate that kidnapers prefer quick access to exit roads even if this means carrying out kidnappings in highly-visible and public places, suggesting that most kidnapers feel confident that bystanders will not interfere.

Near access roads out of the city: As mentioned above and illustrated on the map, kidnapping incidents tend to occur near the access roads out of the city, via which the kidnapers have an easy escape route to areas with fewer security forces. Although a number of these roads and areas have checkpoints located along them, these are typically stationary checkpoints, the locations of which kidnapers are fully-aware and therefore can plan to avoid (see below for more on checkpoints). These roads include: the Sana'a-Hudaydah road, 60 Metre Road, 50 Metre Road and Hadda Street.

Locations frequented by foreigners, e.g. restaurants/supermarkets/residence compounds:

These are locations in which kidnapers have a higher likelihood of finding a potential target, either for random targeting, targeting of an organisation (e.g. based on licence plates) or to initiate hostile surveillance. Such locations also include cafes and shops, particularly if they are on main roads, near access roads out of the city or in one of the areas listed above. Although the majority of kidnapping incidents are assessed as being targeted rather than opportunistic (83% targeted compared to 17% opportunistic) such locations provide a good opportunity for initiating hostile surveillance. Moreover, these are also locations in which victims are likely to be entering/exiting their vehicles in the street or parking areas; situations where they are particularly vulnerable.

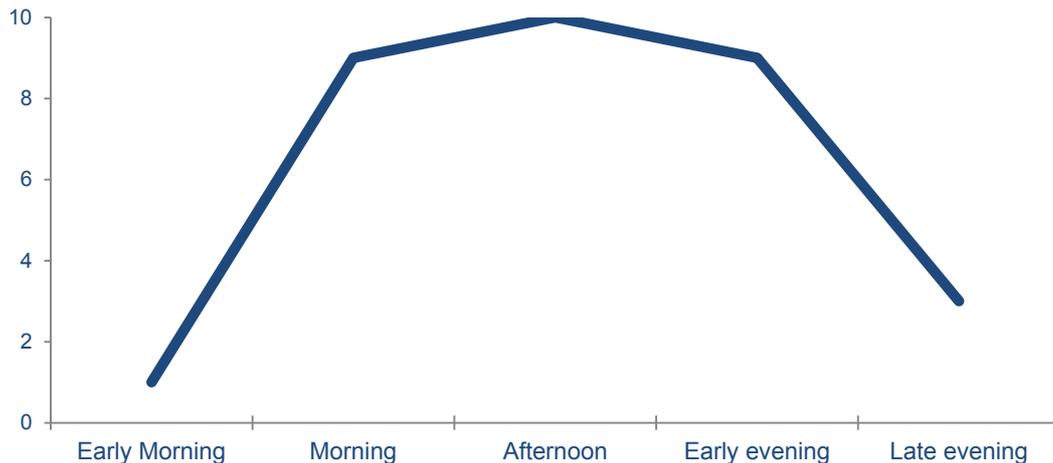
It should also be noted that although a number of the hot-spot areas for kidnappings identified on the maps and detailed above contain checkpoints manned by the security forces this has not mitigated kidnappings. This is particularly true of the stationary checkpoints, which are always in the same location; however, indicators suggest that roving checkpoints, which are located in different parts of the city on different days, have temporarily reduced the number of kidnappings during the periods in which they have been utilised. Overall, the checkpoints have been ineffective at mitigating kidnappings, even during periods when the number of checkpoints has increased due to heightened security concerns, as kidnapers are aware of their locations and can plan alternative routes.



Timings of Kidnappings

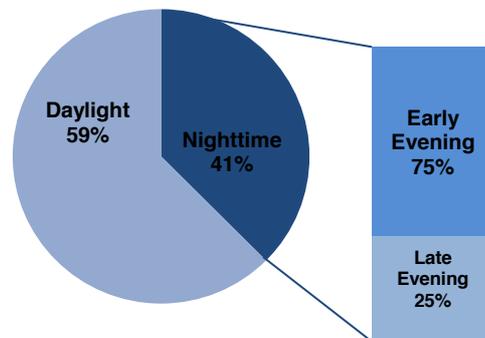
As the graph below illustrates, the kidnapping incidents in Sana'a peak in the afternoon, though there have been incidents reported during all times of the day, including 11% during the late evening. All of the kidnappings in Sana'a have occurred when foreigners were moving and the majority of incidents, almost 60%, have taken place during daylight hours, which is when foreigners are moving the most.

Timings of kidnapping incidents in Sana'a (2012-2014)



However, the timings also show that kidnappings have occurred during the hours of darkness, 41% of all incidents, and therefore that the risk of kidnappings is not lower at any time. The decrease in incidents during the late evening and early morning is likely related to the reduced number of foreigners travelling during those hours, in part due to curfews established by a number of organisations in 2013-2014. However, curfews during the evenings have not proven to be an effective mitigation measure against kidnappings as there is no evidence that they have reduced the number of incidents, at best only affected the timings of them.

Percentage of kidnappings in Sana'a during daylight hours (2012-2014)



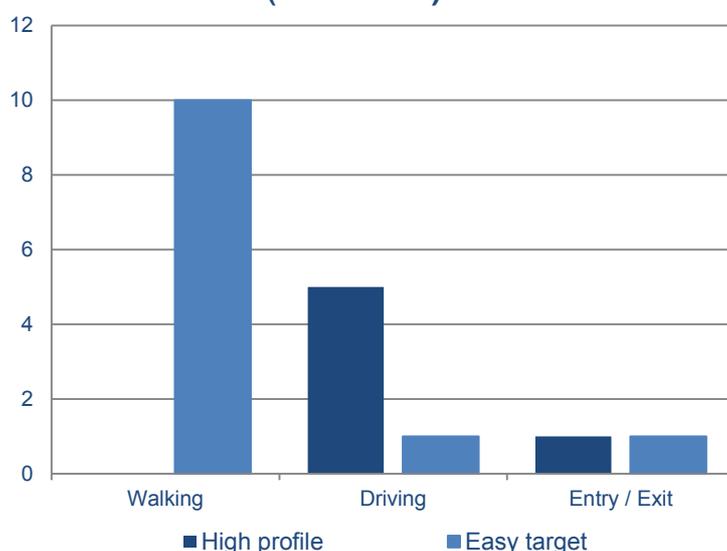
Modus Operandi in Capture

Victims

All kidnapping incidents in Sana'a have occurred while the victim(s) was moving and, as discussed above, there are two common trends in who has been targeted: either individuals walking and/or moving according to fixed routines in timings and routes, referred to in this report as easy targets; or individuals in high-profile vehicles, such as white Land Cruisers or armoured vehicles, often with international organisation or diplomatic licence plates, here defined as high-profile targets. The table below shows the moment of capture for the kidnapping incidents in Sana'a and what the victim was doing at the time. The one instance of an easy target being kidnapped while driving

was a private sector worker who had a fixed routine, travelling to his office in the morning using the same route at the same time every day.

Capture of victims in Sana'a (2010-2014)



- **Walking:** The kidnapping incident occurred while the victim was travelling by foot.
- **Driving:** The kidnapping incident occurred while the victim was in a vehicle.
- **Entry / Exit:** The kidnapping incident occurred while the victim was entering or exiting a vehicle or building.

As the chart shows, the vast majority, over 80%, of the easy targets were kidnapped while they were walking, whereas the majority of high-profile victims were kidnapped while driving, typically because their vehicles identify them as high-profile targets and are easier to conduct surveillance on.

“High-profile armoured vehicles militate against kidnappings to some degree; however, victims are very vulnerable when entering / exiting their vehicles outside of buildings – as shown in a number of recent incidents targeting people in high-profile armoured vehicles”

Overall, 55% of victims were walking, 33% driving and 12% entering/exiting a vehicle and/or building at the time of capture. However, in early-2014 there has been a noticeable increase in the targeting of victims while they are entering/exiting high-profile and armoured vehicles outside of restaurants and supermarket; 44% of incidents in Sana’a, attempted and realised, in 2014 to date. This is likely related to the increasing number of organisations using armoured vehicles as a mitigation measure against kidnappings.

It should also be noted that there has been one reported incident of kidnappers, dressed as police officers, attempting to enter the residence of an international staff member of a development agency. This is the only reported incident in Sana’a of an attempted kidnapping from inside the residence or compound of a foreigner, though there have been a number of kidnapping incidents (8%) just outside of residences when the victim(s) was entering/exiting their vehicle. Furthermore, incidents of hostile surveillance targeting international residences in Sana’a were also frequently reported in 2012-2014.

Kidnappers

Kidnappers use different tactics when capturing the victims: for instance, while tribal kidnappers would only use weapons as intimidation and never point these directly at the victim, criminal kidnappers are more aggressive and have more often acted violently against victims during capture (see more in the following section). Typically, there will be between three to five armed men involved in a kidnapping attempt and in most cases the kidnappers are only using one vehicle; however, there have been cases involving two vehicles. The most common method when capturing the victim, if the victim is driving, is to block the road and force their vehicle to stop, though cases where kidnappers have pulled up on the side of the victim’s vehicle and stopped their car at gunpoint have also been reported – including two attempted kidnappings where the

kidnappers forcefully opened the car door and tried to drag the victim out of their seats. Typically, the armed men surround the victim(s) and hold them at gunpoint, and if the victim(s) is in a vehicle it is common that kidnappers takeover the vehicle, forcing the victim(s) into the backseat.

A common tactic used by kidnappers has been to dress as soldiers, which can grant them a degree of authority and make it easier for them to pass through checkpoints. Furthermore, there was an incident in Sana'a in 2014 in which a fake checkpoint was used to stop the victim's vehicle. In incidents where victims are captured during entry/exit of vehicles, shops, restaurants and residences kidnappers have often had one person on the scene to identify the victim and the rest of the group waiting in a backstreet or at a more discreet distance so as not to alert the victim in advance.

“The most dangerous stage for the victims of kidnappings is the moment of capture, as this is the period with the highest level of violence and fatalities; weapons are often involved, the kidnappers are under pressure and there is a risk of things going wrong”

After capture the victim needs to be transported out of the city and to the area where they will be held. In recent incidents there have been indicators suggesting that kidnappers are using houses in or in proximity to the city, where victims are held temporarily before further transport to other governorates. Transportation, like the moment of capture, is a dangerous stage of the kidnapping for the victim as the kidnappers are usually agitated and nervous and driving at high speeds on rough roads. Before the moment of capture the kidnappers will have checked the route a number of times and assessed the level of state security (e.g. checkpoints). Common tactics that kidnappers use to pass through checkpoints are to hide the victim, use a wedding car, dress the victim in Yemeni female clothes (even if the victim is male), including female shoes and painting the hands with henna, disguise themselves as soldiers or use back roads with no security presence. However, there is also the potential that soldiers at a checkpoint may attempt a rescue, which happened in one case in 2014, the first rescue by security forces in Yemen since 2000. However, rescue attempts put the victim at high risk of being killed in crossfire between kidnappers and security forces, and the accidental killing of victims was among the reasons the government stopped this type of rescue operation in the early-2000s.

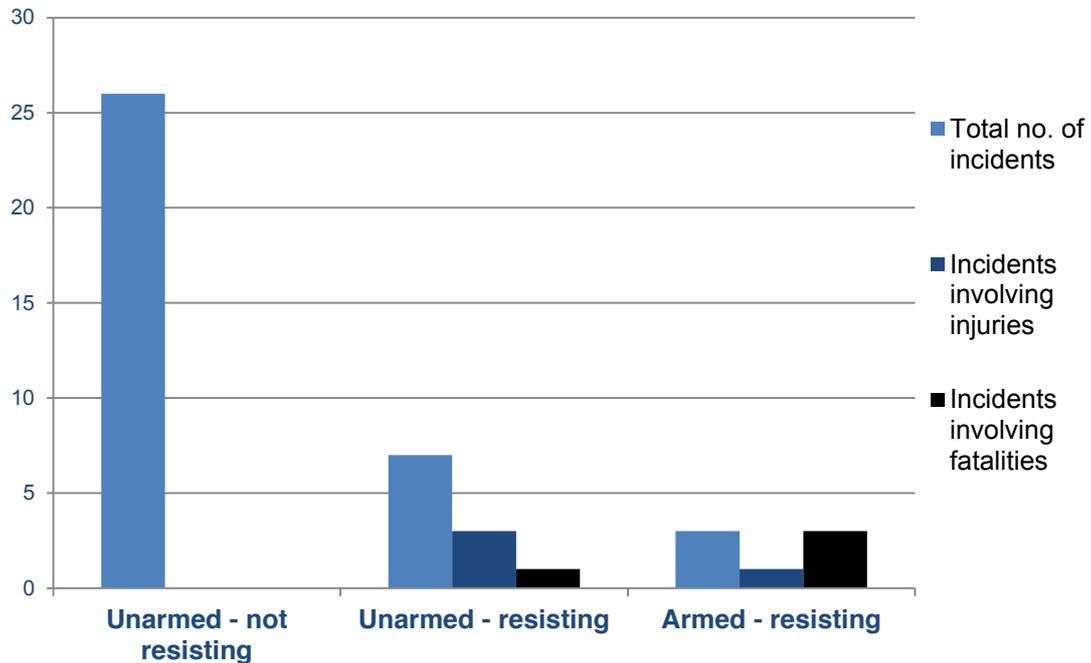
Violence against Victims

Traditionally, violence against victims during capture has not been common; however, there have been increased levels of violence against victims who try to resist or escape during the moment of capture. Of the 36 kidnapping incidents in Sana'a from 2010-2014, seven have involved violence against the victims, including shooting directly at victims trying to resist/escape, and four of these incidents have led to fatalities. Furthermore, in all cases where the victim had armed protection, in the form of close protection (CP) officers or police/security force escort, the kidnapping attempt resulted in fatalities of the victim(s) and/or their protection. Only one fatality has occurred during a kidnapping attempt in which there was no reported armed CP – in January 2014, an Iranian diplomat was shot and killed near Shumailah Hari Supermarket while reportedly trying to escape a kidnapping attempt. There has also been violence against unarmed victims; however, during capture this has only occurred when the victim attempted to resist or escape. This has included shooting directly against the victim and physically assaulting them. In all kidnapping incidents where the victim(s) has not resisted there has been no reported use of violence during the capture, though the threat of violence is always present and has the potential to occur, even if the victim remains calm and follow instructions.

“In all cases where the victim had armed protection, in the form of close protection (CP) officers or police escort, the kidnapping attempt resulted in fatalities”

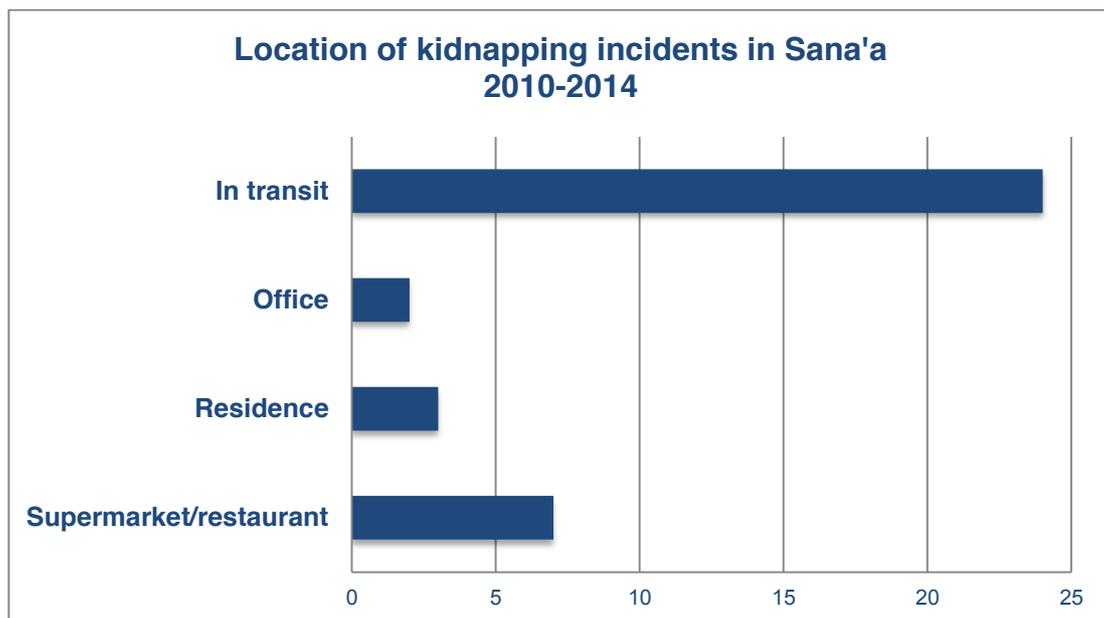
The graph below illustrates injuries and fatalities in kidnapping incidents during which a) the victim was unarmed and not resisting, b) the victim was unarmed, but resisting, and c) the victim had armed protection and was resisting.

Violence during kidnapping incidents (2010-2014)



As the next section details there has typically been a low level of violence against kidnapping victims while in captivity and in all cases to date the victims have been released unharmed. Therefore, based on the assessed cases, the most dangerous stage for the victims of kidnappings is the moment of capture, as this is the period with the highest level of violence and the only fatalities; typically, weapons are involved, the kidnappers are under pressure and there is a risk of things going wrong. As illustrated above, the risk of physical harm to the victim increases dramatically if the victim resists, and armed protection has generated a higher risk of the victim getting killed in crossfire between kidnappers and armed escorts.

Location of kidnapping incidents in Sana'a 2010-2014



5. PERIOD OF CAPTIVITY, NEGOTIATION & RELEASE

Victim Treatment during Captivity

Traditionally, victims of kidnapping in Yemen have been treated well during captivity due to strong tribal norms; however, with the increase in political and criminal kidnappings there is a growing trend of victims being treated worse than previously. In tribal kidnappings, by having the status of guest, the victims are entitled to good treatment. At the very least victims are entitled to bottled water, access to toilet facilities, a bed to sleep in and proper food. Female victims are furthermore entitled to live with a family. In political and criminal kidnappings the same requirements are not in place and there are frequent reports of ill-treatment and violence during captivity, yet victims are still being treated better than in kidnappings in many other countries in the region. Even in political/criminal cases there remains some adherence to the tribal norms in the treatment of kidnapping victims, particularly as the victims are often held in tribal areas and the kidnapers require some level of acceptance from the tribes. Although reports of violence and ill-treatment against victims have become more frequent no victims have been killed by their kidnapers during captivity and there have not been any reports of sexual violence against victims in captivity.

Foreigners currently in captivity			
Date	Nationality	Employment	Taken from
12 February 2014	British	Teacher	Sana'a - Hadda
3 February 2014	British	Oil sector worker	Sana'a - Off Beirut Street
6 October 2013	Sierra Leonean	Aid worker	Sana'a - Amran Junction
17 September 2013	American	Journalist	Sana'a - Zubairy Street
21 July 2013	Iranian	Diplomat	Sana'a - Zero Street
27 May 2013	South African	Teacher	Taiz
28 March 2012	Saudi Arabian	Diplomat	Aden

One of the reasons for the deterioration in the treatment of victims, along with the shift from tribal to political/criminal kidnappings that is detailed in Chapter 2, is that it is no longer the common rule

“No victims have been killed by their kidnapers during captivity and there have not been any reports of sexual violence against victims in captivity”

that victims are held with a tribe, but are in many cases instead frequently moved around, and often sold to another group. When victims are not held within a specific tribal territory the kidnapers becomes less accountable in terms of treatment of the victim and adherence to tribal norms. Moreover, the kidnapers do not necessarily have the resources to look after the victim in the same manner as tribal kidnappings, especially as it is an expensive endeavour. As the chart on the duration of kidnappings

below shows, political and criminal kidnappings on average last 40 times as long as tribal kidnappings, which requires significant costs, and is one of the reasons victims are increasingly being sold on to other groups. Another possible reason for the declining treatment of kidnapping victims is that in tribal kidnappings the victim(s) is only perceived as a bargaining chip and not as an antagonistic party, while in politically-motivated kidnappings the victim(s) tends to be viewed as an enemy, or at least as representing an enemy, resulting in a higher risk of physical harm and ill treatment of the victim(s).

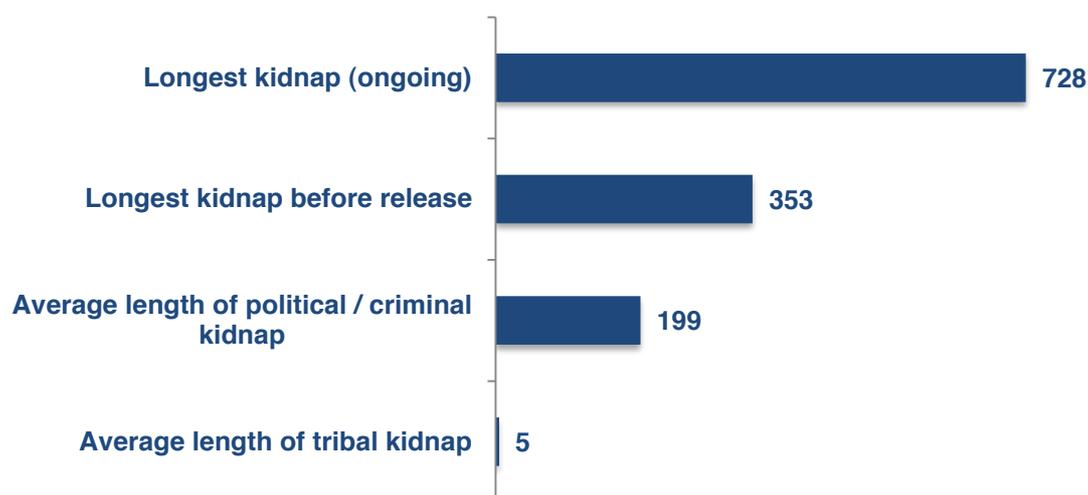
There is also an increasing trend of kidnapers making hostage videos, which before 2011 was not typically seen in kidnapping incidents in Yemen. Generally, the hostage videos are related to demands for the payment of a ransom for the victims, and therefore the trend of ransom payments as a release mechanism and the release of hostage videos are interconnected. Another trend is

the increasing number of threats in these videos that the victim(s) will be killed or sold on to another group, e.g. AQAP, if a ransom is not paid by a specific deadline. To date, none of these threats have been carried out, and no kidnapping victims have been killed by their kidnappers¹. Again, this escalation is likely related to the payment of ransoms, as the kidnappers attempt to apply pressure for payments to be made or for higher amounts as part of negotiations. Although these threats have not resulted in the execution of any hostages there remains the potential for this to happen, particularly if the practice of paying ransoms ends or if the hostages are from countries that do not pay ransoms, e.g. the US or UK. It should also be noted that in some cases the videos have been faked, with the victims being told to play along and act scared, despite the victims not believing that their safety is being threatened. However, hostage videos are not made in every kidnapping case, and it is often the case that there is a complete information blackout about the incident, with no information being released about the victim's whereabouts or status.

There have been reports of kidnappers attempting to obtain information from victims about other foreigners, including locations of residences, offices and movements. Although in the cases that this has been reported there is no evidence that the information has led to any further kidnappings it still has the potential to significantly disrupt an individual's or organisation's operations in the country. As well as kidnappers seeking information on other foreigners through direct questioning of the victims, there has also been one reported incident when the kidnappers gained the locations of the residences and offices of foreigners through GPS locations stored on the victim's phone. Although this has only been recorded in one case it is worth noting that storing the location of the residences/offices of international members of staff in the GPS of vehicles or mobile phones can place other people at risk. These different attempts to obtain information on foreigners from kidnapping victims has so far not been common, but it nonetheless has the potential to develop as an easy means for kidnappers to obtain information.

“There has also been one reported incident when the kidnappers gained the locations of the residences and offices of foreigners through GPS locations stored on the victim's phone”

Duration of Captivity (as of 13/04/2014)



¹ In 2009, nine foreigners (Germans, British and South Korean) were abducted in Sa'ada governorate by unknown perpetrators. Three women were found dead immediately afterwards; however, the rest of the group remained missing until two children were found alive in Saudi Arabia years later. Most likely the two children are the only survivors and the rest of the group has been killed. In this study the incident have not been categorised as a kidnapping, but instead as an abduction and targeted attack.

Mediation & Release

As illustrated in the chart above, the duration of kidnappings significantly varies between the different types. The average length of captivity in tribal kidnappings between 2010 and 2014 was only five days, whereas the average for political/criminal cases was almost 200 days. Despite the large differences in duration between the different types of kidnappings the mechanisms for solving the cases are very similar and mainly build on traditional procedures for mediation.

Mediation

In most of the kidnapping cases, including political/criminal incidents, the victims are released through a mediator, and there are often multiple mediators involved in a single case, ranging from local mediators to high-level political actors in Yemen and international organisations and governments. Traditionally, all kidnapping cases are negotiated and solved through mediators, who are often paid for their role in the process. The mediators are a vital part of the release process, though there are usually several reasons for their involvement, from financial to political considerations. Mediators are chosen based on their suitability to mediate between the specific parties and must be accepted by both sides; however, mediators are not always neutral and can sometimes play more than one role. It is worth noting that up to date most victims in political kidnappings have been kept with criminal groups for a period of time before being handed over to AQAP and during this period there is a greater window of opportunity for negotiations to achieve results without being complicated by many overlapping actors.

Restoration of a broken right

In tribal kidnappings, the kidnapping is usually solved when the perceived violation of the tribe's rights are restored, e.g. by the government releasing prisoners, delivering jobs or building infrastructure. If the kidnapping is motivated by a business dispute the demand might take a financial form, though without being considered a ransom demand. In most tribal cases a guarantee is provided by the conflicting party that the right will be restored upon the release of the victim; however, if this does not later happen it can motivate further kidnappings. Furthermore, there have been cases where mediators have not received promised payments for their efforts and have therefore later initiated kidnappings with the demand of receiving payment from the conflicting parties in a previous kidnapping case.

CASE 3: A previous mediator threatens to kidnap

During a tribal kidnapping of a European couple a mediator appointed by the local tribe played a crucial role in securing the release of the victims. Years later the mediator claimed that he had not received the promised payment for his mediation and turned to the embassy of the victims' home country with his claim for payment. When the embassy refused to speak to the mediator he threatened to kidnap a diplomat and, as the threat was considered credible, the embassy subsequently had to upscale its security measures.

Ransom payments

Ransom payments fall outside the focus of this report, but it should be noted that the payment of ransoms has become an established procedure for the release of kidnapping victims in Yemen since 2011. This is not to say that ransoms were not paid before 2011, but they were on a far smaller scale and were not a common mechanism for the release of kidnapping victims, unlike today. The first well-known and significant ransom payment in Yemen was for the release of three European citizens kidnapped in 2011 in Hadramawt and held by alleged members of AQAP for almost five months (see 'Case 1' in Chapter 1). The ransom payment was paid through an intermediary state, which has become common practice in such cases, often nearby Gulf States. However, the payment of ransoms is a highly unsustainable solution and is a significant contributing factor in driving further kidnappings, and despite a number of international initiatives to halt such payments there is no evidence it has stopped.

“The payment of ransoms is a highly unsustainable solution and is a significant contributing factor in driving further kidnappings”

Rescue operations

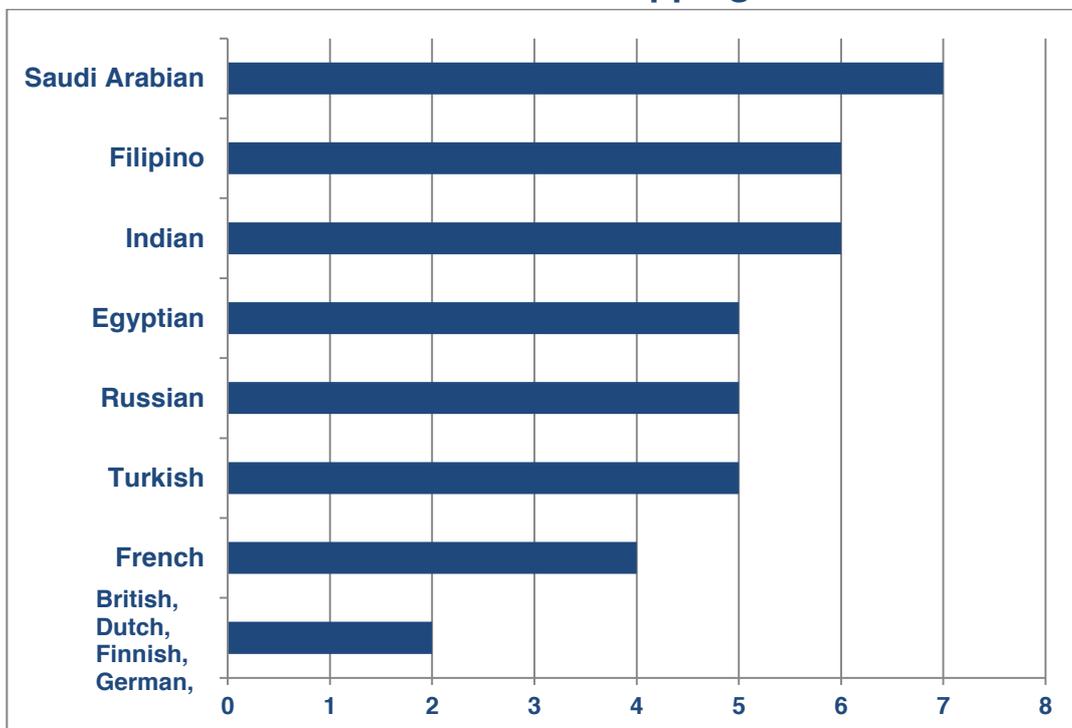
In only one kidnapping case during 2010-2014 has the security forces in Yemen attempted a rescue operation of a kidnapping victim: in March 2014, security forces manning a checkpoint on the road to Marib rescued an Italian development worker who had been kidnapped hours earlier in Sana'a. However, it should be noted that although the rescue was successful and the victim was unharmed, he was caught in crossfire between the security forces at the checkpoint and the kidnapers and was therefore placed at very high risk. Previous rescue attempts have also put the victim(s) at high risk of being killed in crossfire between kidnapers and security forces, and the accidental killing of victims was among the reasons the government stopped this type of rescue attempt in the early-2000s². Rescue operations by government forces may become a trend in the future as the kidnappings evolve; however, this is unlikely to have an impact on the number of kidnapping incidents in the short term.

“Out of 44 realised kidnappings from 2010 to date there has only been one case in which the kidnapers have been charged and are now awaiting trial”

Legal actions

Legal actions against kidnapers have not been common in recent years; on the contrary, out of 44 realised kidnappings from 2010 to date there has only been one case in which the kidnapers have been charged and are now awaiting trial. And even in this one case it is not the actual kidnapers, but the low-level criminals hired to carry out the operation that have been arrested as a part of a larger investigation into the group's criminal activities, including carjacking. Whereas the Yemeni government up until 2014 took very limited action against kidnapers it should be noted that rhetoric against kidnapers changed slightly in 2014 along with changes in some ministries and that the government for the first time started giving the appearance of seeking ways to counter the threat.

Most common nationalities of kidnapping victims 2011-2014



² In the two most significant incidents: in 1998, a military rescue attempt of 16 British, American and Australian tourists kidnapped by the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army resulted in the death of four of the victims, and many more injured, when they were used as human shields. While in 2000, a Norwegian diplomat and his son visiting Yemen as tourists were kidnapped in Sana'a. At a checkpoint on the way out of the city the kidnapers engaged in a gun battle with security forces, resulting in the death of the diplomat.

6. FUTURE TACTICS & THREATS

As Yemen has undergone dramatic political change in recent years and political groups continue to struggle for formal and informal power in the country kidnapping has evolved into not only a very lucrative business, but also an effective political tool to intimidate and put pressure on an international community that is deeply involved in the political process. Kidnappers have displayed a high capacity to adapt their tactics to the changing mitigation measures of the international community in Yemen, e.g. coming to the city when foreigners stopped moving by road, targeting vehicles when foreigners stopped walking, and then later targeting armoured vehicles when these became more common.

Unless the political and security climate in Yemen undergoes significant improvements in the coming period kidnapping is likely to remain a significant security concern for foreigners based in Yemen, especially in Sana'a, and the threat is likely to continue to evolve. While the possibility exists for more aggressive ways of targeting the international community to emerge, e.g. assassinations and targeted attacks, kidnapping as a threat also has the potential to escalate. Some of the potential developments are briefly examined below; however, the security situation remains in flux and regular assessments of emerging trends and changing threat dynamics is vital for organisations operating in Yemen.

Escalation in violence

Kidnappings have already evolved to include a high risk of violence against victims, especially if they resist, try to escape or have armed protection (see Chapter 4 above). However, violence associated with kidnapping attempts has the potential to increase further, especially if the use of armed escorts becomes common practice among members of the international community or if state security forces begin to intervene in order to rescue victims during the moment of capture/transportation. In addition, a risk exists of violence against victims in captivity increasing as well as the potential killing of victims, for example, if ransom demands are not met or as a political statement.

Fake soldiers and checkpoints

Kidnappers dressed as fake soldiers have been reported in a high number of kidnapping cases; however, the use of fake checkpoints within cities is less common, having only occurred in very few kidnapping cases. Nonetheless, reports of carjackers setting up fake checkpoints within Sana'a, including in Hadda area, illustrates that state security is currently so limited that operating through fake checkpoints is possible and that distinguishing a fake checkpoint from a real one can be very difficult.

Attempts on residences

To date there have been few kidnapping cases involving the capture of victims outside residences, and only one confirmed incident of kidnappers forcefully trying to enter a residence (even though other unconfirmed incidents have been reported). However, hostile surveillance of residences and offices has been common and it is likely that kidnappers in the future will increasingly try to capture their victims from residences, either by breaking into them or when the victims are entering/exiting.

Criminal copy-cat kidnappings

A general increase in crime and a break-down in social and traditional norms across Yemen combined with common perceptions of very high ransom payments and low legal consequences are likely to inspire criminal groups to carry out criminal copy-cat kidnappings. This has to some extent already occurred, especially in cases targeting family members of Yemeni businessmen, and should it continue to proliferate it will likely generate an increase in kidnapping cases as well as more opportunistic targeting and ill-treatment of victims.

7. MITIGATING THE RISK

Since 2011 kidnapping has emerged as the main security concern for foreigners in Yemen, especially in Sana'a, where 56% of all incidents have occurred. Finding ways to mitigate the kidnapping risk is central to maintaining an international staff presence and operations in Yemen, especially in Sana'a, and requires a flexible security set-up capable of adapting to the changing modus operandi in kidnappings.

It is a common perception that mainly foreign individuals without any security set-up, e.g. students, journalists and some private sector employees, are at risk of kidnapping as they move around freely and do not necessarily follow any security procedures. However, as this report shows, 53%

“53% of kidnapping cases in Sana'a have targeted high-profile victims, mainly diplomats and staff of established international organisations, with security plans and procedures in place”

of cases in Sana'a have targeted high-profile victims, mainly diplomats and staff of established international organisations, with security plans and procedures in place. The findings in this study suggest that the reasons high-profile individuals become victims of kidnappings is not because kidnappings are unavoidable in Yemen, but often due to either a) their security plans offer standard solutions that do not sufficiently take into account the threat environment and underlying dynamics, or b) the individual's behaviour goes against the organisation's SOPs, therefore making the staff member vulnerable to kidnapping.

There can be a tendency to lean towards traditional security solutions without consideration of their actual effect on the operating environment, and when security plans build on standard solutions rather than mitigation measures designed according to the risk dynamics in the existing context they have a limited effect in ensuring staff security. Therefore, security plans can often end up advocating standard mitigation measures, such as high-profile vehicles, curfews, restriction of staff movements and locations, rather than more effective, but also time-consuming, strategies such as varying of timings and routes, counter surveillance and limiting the spread of information. The other vulnerability identified in this study is individual staff behaviour and how this can put the rest of an organisation's personnel at risk, even if all necessary security precautions were taken on the employer's side. Examples of this include international staff exiting armoured vehicles outside restaurants and supermarkets despite instructions not to do so or international staff establishing small, everyday routines, e.g. going to the same shop or neighbourhood restaurant on a regular basis.

“Organisations and foreigners without dedicated resources for security can utilise most of the strategies without any investment other than the time it takes to change staff behavioural patterns”

Six Effective Mitigation Strategies

The aim of this study is to examine the changing tactics and motives in kidnappings from 2010 to 2014 and as part of this identify strategies that can be utilised by individuals, as well as organisations, companies and embassies, to mitigate the kidnapping risk. Based on an in-depth examination of qualitative as well as quantitative data collected for the purpose of this study it has been possible to identify six mitigation strategies that when combined and effectively implemented significantly reduce the risk of kidnapping within the current context.

Common for all six strategies is that they are very cost-effective and do not require huge security budgets or resources to implement; on the contrary, even organisations or foreigners without dedicated resources for security can utilise most of the strategies without any investment other

than the time it takes to change staff behavioural patterns. In addition, the identified strategies are sustainable in that they do not contribute to an escalation in the violence associated with kidnappings, for instance as the use of security escorts or armed protection would.

The six strategies are presented below with some considerations under each aimed at inspiring further discussions; the advice given is general and is not a substitution for detailed security plans.

1. Avoid walking

As illustrated in this study, 56% of kidnappings in Sana'a occurred when victims were moving by foot and avoiding walking, even for short distances, remains the single most important mitigation strategy. As most foreigners implemented this advice a long time ago and stopped all movements by foot, the few individuals who still move by foot are subject to higher visibility and greater vulnerability, especially if following regular timings or routes. In addition, it is important to remember that kidnappers would always prefer to capture a victim moving by foot rather than stopping a vehicle as there is a lower risk of things going wrong.

2. Maintain a low-profile approach, including vehicles

Of all the kidnapping incidents identified in this study only one incident involved a low-profile vehicle, and even in this incident the victim was following a daily routine of taking the same route at the same time every day. As almost all kidnapping incidents involve either people walking or moving in high-profile vehicles it suggests that changing to low-profile vehicles reduces visibility, allows greater flexibility in movements, and mitigates profiling, hostile surveillance and kidnapping attempts. Low-profile vehicles here refers to smaller vehicles that easily blend in with the regular traffic and have private licence plates, while high-profile vehicles refers to 4x4, often white Toyota Land Cruisers, with diplomatic or international company/organisation licence plates. The licence plates are as important as the vehicle model itself; a small car on diplomatic licence plates is not considered low-profile. Similar to using low-profile vehicles a low-profile approach can be adapted at many other levels, including by dressing locally and in a way that reduce visibility and ensuring that security installations at residence/office are discrete and does not raise the profile of the compound (e.g. the way that CCTV cameras, wire and concrete blocks does).

3. Vary routes and timings and limit circles of information

Varying routes and timings in movements is vital to avoid profiling, hostile surveillance and kidnapping attempts, and even though the exact number cannot be estimated indicators suggest that fixed patterns and routines played a crucial role in the profiling and surveillance of victims in many of the kidnapping incidents. Varying timings and routes sounds easy, but is often a difficult mitigation strategy to implement; most international staff work according to fixed office hours, generating patterns in timings of their daily movements between residences and offices. Furthermore, most internationals and their drivers tend to use the larger main streets during movements rather than smaller back roads, again generating patterns in movements and making counter surveillance difficult to carry out. Implementing flexible office hours and teaching drivers, or self-driving international staff, the importance of counter surveillance and using different roads to/from the residence/office and, preferably, smaller back roads is therefore necessary in order to enable staff to effectively vary routes and timings. In addition to varying routes and timings it is important that circles of information regarding planned movements are kept to a minimum, e.g. planned field trips, movements to the airport, high-level visits, etc. Limiting information needs to happen both at an organisational and an individual level, and can include planning meetings last minute; not informing outsiders about timings of arrival/departures or planned travel routes; and instructing staff not to share such information with outsiders, e.g. hotel staff or project stakeholders.

4. Minimise exposure in public and avoid hot-spot areas

As illustrated throughout this study, kidnappers are quick to adapt to new circumstances and to change their modus operandi according to the behaviour of their intended victims, and therefore hot-spot areas and high-risk locations are dynamic and change with time. At the time of writing, and based on the accumulated data for this report, a number of geographical areas in Sana'a can

be defined as hot-spot areas, e.g. Hadda Street and Zero Street, as well as certain places frequented by foreigners, e.g. supermarkets. However, these rapidly change and therefore security advice also needs to be constantly reviewed to ensure an effective response to changes in the threat environment. Minimising movements to hot-spot areas and avoiding high-risk locations, e.g. supermarkets, is important in mitigating the risk. In addition, generally minimising public exposure is important, such as restaurants with a view from the street, regular visits to the same gym or any other activities that involve high public exposure.

5. Ensure that guards, drivers and staff are trained in counter-surveillance

Guards and drivers are key personnel in mitigating kidnapping risk and they will often be the first to report hostile surveillance against an office, residence or vehicle; however, in order to detect surveillance training in counter surveillance is necessary. If guards and drivers have received training in how to detect and react to hostile surveillance then early warning regarding a potential threat becomes possible, which allows time for the organisation to react and take the right precautions. International staff, especially if self-driving, should also receive training in counter-surveillance to ensure proper detection and reaction to threats.

6. Ensure background screening of staff and a mechanism for reporting of extortion

As mentioned in Chapter 3 of this report, extortion of national staff as a means to obtain information on the identity and whereabouts of vulnerable foreigners has become increasingly common and has the potential to develop further as a mechanism for kidnappers to select victims and plan kidnapping operations. First, background screening of staff, especially guards, drivers and logistic staff, are important steps in preventing leaks of sensitive information. Second, as all staff members can become subject to extortion for information, including threats or offers of financial benefits, creating safe mechanisms for reporting such incidents is crucial. As a part of this study national staff in different positions from various organisations, embassies and companies who have been subject to extortion were interviewed, and all expressed concerns about reporting the extortion to their employer out of fear that it would generate mistrust of them and affect their position or initiate further police investigations that would endanger them and their families. In order to ensure that staff feel safe reporting incidents related to extortion for sensitive information it is important that organisations create mechanisms for reporting that staff are comfortable with and then briefing everyone on these procedures.

Protection and Deterrence

Within the past eight months a number of organisations have started using armoured vehicles as a way of mitigating the kidnapping risk; however, the use of armoured vehicles by itself has not proved effective as mitigation against kidnapping. It offers a limited, preventative measure that, if used, needs to be combined with other security procedures in order to be truly effective, including counter-surveillance, trained drivers and an organisational culture of security that is accepted by all members of staff, as outlined above. The use of armoured vehicles raises the profile of the individual and organisation, making it a more likely target for hostile surveillance and possible target for kidnapping. The number of kidnapping incidents involving high-profile armoured vehicles,

“Very few traditional security measures, e.g. armoured vehicles, curfews and armed protection, have a positive effect when trying to mitigate the kidnapping risk in a Yemeni context”

44% of kidnapping cases in 2014, also shows that they offer only a limited deterrent against kidnapping and that kidnappers wanting to target an organisation using armoured vehicles will find a way to do so, e.g. when the intended victim is entering/exiting the vehicle in a public space. Therefore access to compounds for entering/exiting the vehicle is an essential requirement if using armoured vehicles. It should also be noted that the use of a tracking system in vehicles is not an effective mitigation measure nor has it proven useful in the event of a kidnapping, as kidnappers will usually dispose of the car.

Armed security details is another way of protecting staff against kidnappings, but as illustrated in this report armed protection statistically increases the risk of physical harm, including fatalities, dramatically. In addition, armed protection as mitigation against kidnapping is highly unsustainable and contributes to generating increased levels of violence and aggressive behaviour of kidnappers in the medium to long term.

In summary, very few traditional security measures, e.g. armoured vehicles, curfews and armed protection, have a positive effect when trying to mitigate the kidnapping risk in a Yemeni context. Whereas these measures might be utilised to mitigate other threats, e.g. targeted attack, they cannot stand alone as a kidnapping mitigation, which instead requires flexible and pro-active security plans and investments in training and capacity building of staff in order to establish a culture of security.

Establishing a Culture of Security

As illustrated above, adopting one or two security measures, e.g. only avoiding walking or just changing routine, is not an effective mitigation against kidnapping; all mitigation measures need to be implemented in combination with other proactive security procedures, such as a general security awareness and counter-surveillance, in order for an individual or organisation to effectively reduce the risk of kidnapping. It is important that mitigation measures and security plans are not static, but are flexible and can be scaled according to changes in the risk environment. Moreover, security plans should focus on kidnapping prevention rather than survival; trainings, in particular, have a tendency to focus on the latter, whereas much can be done to equip the individual with tools aimed at preventing kidnapping in the first place. Finally, being proactive rather than reactive is important, but also challenging. Instead of introducing curfews or lock-down after kidnapping incidents, warnings and security measures should be introduced based on new trends in the risk environment; something that often requires dedicated risk analysis departments or personnel.

“Instead of introducing curfews or lock-down after kidnapping incidents, warnings and security measures should be introduced based on new trends in the risk environment”

Mitigation measures are only effective if staff accept and follow them, which requires acceptance of the importance of security as part of an organisation’s operations and an understanding among staff that they are responsible for security, not only for themselves, but also for others within their organisation, their organisation’s operations, and the wider international community. Yet, as mentioned above, individual staff behaviour can make any organisation vulnerable and therefore establishing a culture of security and acceptance of security procedures among staff is as important as the security plan itself. Among other ways this can be done by ensuring training of staff and opening up to a more interactive process between staff and security managers, where staff can buy-in with their security concerns, but also express issues related to loss of personal freedom. So rather than a top-down approach to security, the implementation of the security plan becomes a participatory process with open staff discussions in order to promote greater awareness and ownership.

ABOUT SAFER YEMEN

Safer Yemen was established in 2012 and is the first company to provide organisations and companies with sustainable security services tailored to the specific context of their operations in Yemen. We are based in Sana'a and our services are provided by a team with in-depth knowledge of the Yemeni environment and extensive experience in providing security support to development, government and commercial actors in the country.

Safer Yemen offers a new and more innovative form of security support that incorporates high ethical standards with in-depth local knowledge and pro-active risk management. We never offer standard solutions; instead we integrate risk analysis and pro-active risk management into all aspects of our services and tailor these to the activities and profile of our clients.

Our services differ from other, more traditional, security providers by aiming to create a safer environment for all – with a focus on transparency, anti-corruption and capacity building. All our services build on an in-depth understanding of the highly dynamic security situation in Yemen, and our advisories, strategies and solutions are constantly updated based on the latest developments in the security environment.

Our services

We work with development, governmental and commercial actors operating in Yemen and provide a wide range of services under four key areas:

Training courses designed to build the capacity of staff in handling complex security challenges on an individual, organisational and professional level. Our courses are designed according to international standards in security training and are tailored to the specific context of Yemen.

Operational security support delivered with a strong focus on situational awareness and risk mitigation. Our operational staff are highly trained and can provide everything from closed-protection to rapid response and manned guarding in a low-profile and conflict-sensitive manner.

Risk analysis is an integral part of all the services we deliver and we have a dedicated risk analysis department specialised in detecting new threats and emerging risks and designing security advice with the purpose of keeping our clients safe. In addition we also offer tailored risk analysis products to inform key decisions and engagement in Yemen.

Consultancies are always tailored to the client and are delivered by highly experienced consultants with in-depth knowledge of the security dynamics in Yemen. We offer consultancies ranging from desktop reviews of local conflict dynamics to field risk assessments, reviews of security plans, etc.

Our approach

Our approach to security is based upon sustainability and combines situational awareness and pro-active risk management with capacity building to enable organisations and companies to effectively mitigate security risks.

We apply sustainable security strategies in all our services with the aim of providing our clients with tailored security solutions in a way that does no-harm to the fragile environment in which they operate. Our vision is to contribute to a safer Yemen; safer for our clients as well as the local communities. Therefore, it is important that our work contributes positively to the environment and communities in which we operate; making them safer and not in any way contributing to conflict or insecurity.

We strive to maintain high ethics in regard to all aspects of our work and in addition to conflict-sensitivity and do-no-harm principles we apply strategies for equal opportunity, anti-corruption and anti-bribery policies.