

## Global Kidnap Review 2016



### Middle East

Local and foreign nationals face the threat of kidnap for ransom and sectarian abductions by militant groups across the region...

**See below for the 2015 overview and 2016 forecast**

### Africa

The threat of kidnapping in North Africa and the Sahel has grown with the spread of Islamist militancy. Nigeria continues to experience militant and criminal abductions ...

**See below for the 2015 overview and 2016 forecast**

### Americas

Despite the reduction in reported incidents in several countries, on going insecurity and corruption belies the true threat of kidnapping...

**See below for the 2015 overview and 2016 forecast**

### Asia

The threat of kidnapping varies across the region from militant / terrorist and criminal elements with an increase in express and virtual kidnappings...

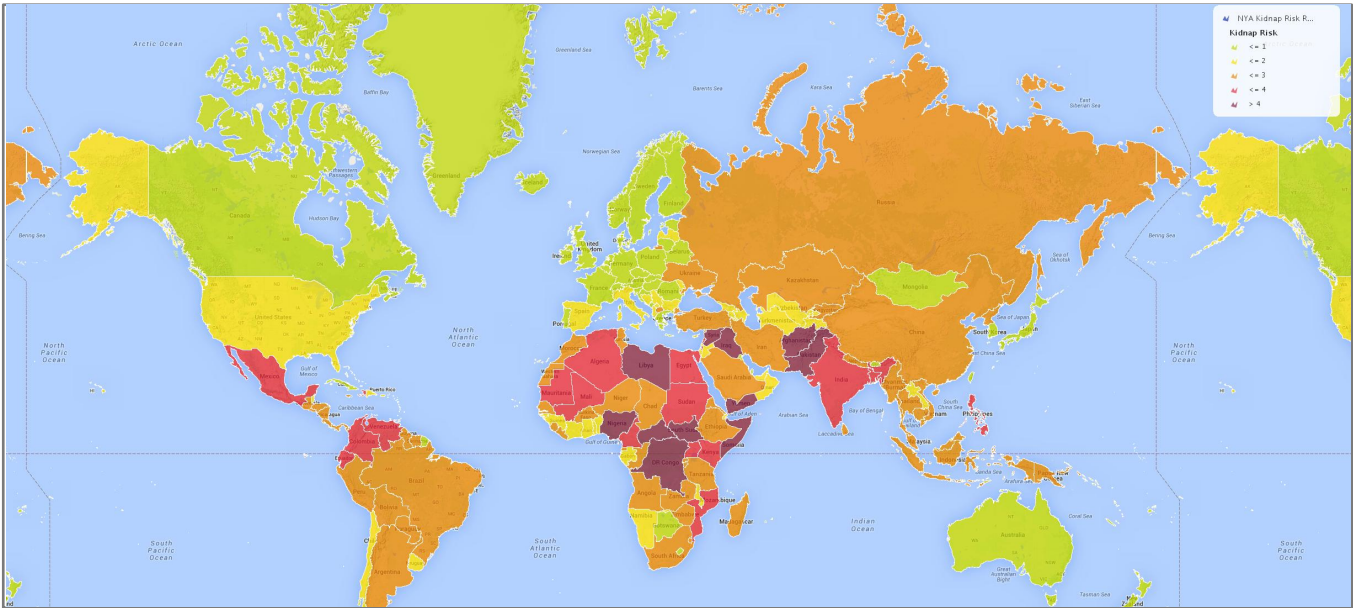
**See below for the 2015 overview and 2016 forecast**

### Company Information

NYA International is a leading global risk and crisis management consultancy. Since 1990 we have helped organisations to maximise opportunities and operate successfully in complex environments around the world...

**See below for more information**

# Global Kidnap Review 2016



## Severe threat countries

1. Libya
2. Afghanistan
3. Democratic Republic of Congo
4. Iraq
5. Somalia
6. South Sudan
7. Yemen
8. Central African Republic
9. Syria
10. Nigeria
11. Pakistan

## High threat countries

1. Venezuela
2. Colombia
3. Egypt
4. Bangladesh
5. India
6. Mali
7. Mozambique
8. Sudan
9. Uganda
10. Algeria
11. Haiti
12. Mexico
13. Lebanon
14. Philippines
15. West Bank & Gaza Strip

16. Cameroon
17. Kenya
18. Ecuador
19. Mauritania

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# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## Executive summary

This special report identifies the trends in kidnap for ransom observed over the course of 2015. Written by NYA analysts it focuses on global hotspots and looks ahead to how threats might develop during 2016. Key themes driving kidnap for ransom recur in hotspot countries: militancy and conflict; failed or weak state security; corruption and criminality; and stretched national budgets associated with low oil prices are widely observed. However, the report also highlights success stories, especially the effect of peace talks on reducing Colombia's kidnap threat.

The report is released alongside NYA's 2016 Kidnap and Piracy Map. The map illustrates kidnap and piracy threat ratings based on data collected daily by NYA's 24/7 team of analysts, including our database of over 14,000 kidnap incidents and piracy statistics from MarTrack™ – NYA's integrated fleet risk management platform. A live, online version of the map is available via our website.

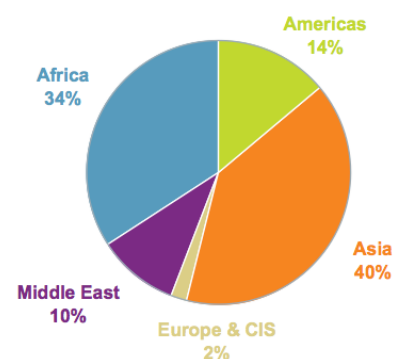
## 2015 in review

For some, the past year was a story of continuation. Conflicts stemming from the Arab Spring sustained severe threats in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Kidnappings were characterised by their sectarian and political natures as much as financial gain.

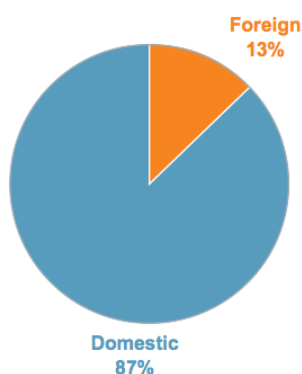
For others, 2015 saw a worsening in their rating, with South Sudan and Central African Republic moving to severe following intensified civil conflicts. Kenya, Mozambique, Mauritania and Uganda also worsened, contributing to Africa's second place on the list of kidnap incidents by region. India and Bangladesh changed to high ratings, with localised criminals and Maoist rebels targeting domestic nationals. At 40% Asia reported the highest number of kidnap incidents worldwide. Islamist militant across the Middle East, Asia and Africa continued to employ kidnapping as a revenue generating Activity as well as a weapon of war.

In Latin America, Colombia's peace talks showed how mediation can reduce conflict driven kidnapping, albeit over a long period of time. Although Venezuela's rating improved, and Mexico reported decreases in kidnapping, both remain affected by corruption and the underreporting of crime.

**Kidnap incidents by region, 2015\***



## Kidnap victim nationality, 2015\* 2016 – the year ahead



The report acknowledges the economic pressures of low oil prices on Libya and Venezuela, which have the potential to destabilise both countries further. In Nigeria, this has coincided with increased militancy in the oil producing Delta, posing a specific threat to the maritime industry.

The threat of kidnapping by Islamist extremists is discussed for a number of countries. In Syria and Iraq, proliferating interventions are constraining groups' revenue, potentially incentivising kidnap for ransom further.

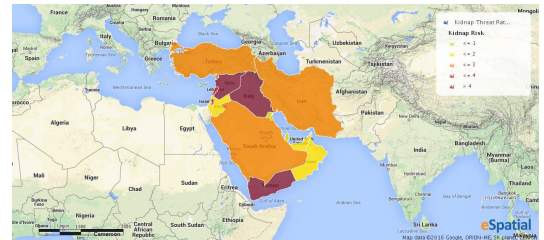
While the threats to foreign nationals are well acknowledged, they only accounted for 13% of overall victims in 2015. Often being less protected, it is likely that throughout 2016 domestic nationals will continue to face a higher threat of kidnapping.

# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## Middle East

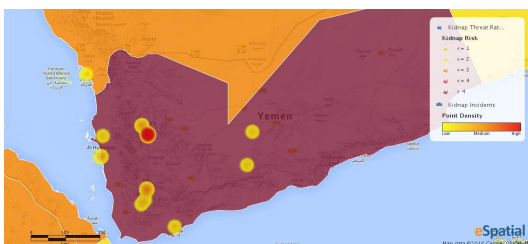
### Regional overview

In 2015 kidnappings for ransom, sectarian abductions and conflict-related hostage situations continued to pose a threat to both domestic and foreign nationals across the Middle East. Regional hotspots with a severe threat of kidnap include Syria, Iraq and Yemen, all of which are beset by violent conflicts. The militant group Islamic State (IS) remained actively engaged in both financially and ideologically motivated kidnappings and abductions.



### Yemen - SEVERE

#### 2015 Overview



The severe threat from kidnap in Yemen was sustained by the complete breakdown in order amid the Saudi-led military campaign against the Houthi rebels. Though the majority of incidents in 2015 were politically motivated detentions carried out by the Houthi rebels, exposed foreign nationals continued to be targeted by a myriad of perpetrators. Notable cases include the kidnapping of a Tunisian Red Cross worker in December and of French national Isabelle Prime in February, both of which took place in Sana'a.

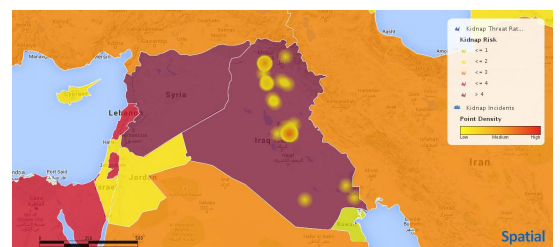
#### 2016 Forecast

The kidnap threat in Yemen will remain unchanged in 2016, driven by conflict and likely proliferating in areas most affected by violence. Various actors, including the Houthi rebels, the militant group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and tribal militias will operate largely unrestrained due to the continued weakness of the Aden-based government led by President Hadi. Foreign nationals will remain attractive targets, as their perceived high value can be leveraged to meet both political and financial demands in a complex conflict-affected environment.

### Iraq - SEVERE

#### 2015 Overview

With security forces overstretched in fighting IS in western and northern Iraq, kidnappings across the Shia-majority south increased markedly in 2015. Powerful Shia militias were responsible for the kidnapping of dozens of foreign nationals, including US, Turkish, Qatari, Kuwaiti and Saudi citizens. IS militants carried out hundreds of kidnappings targeting domestic nationals in areas under its control, with incidents primarily motivated by financial gain and ideology.





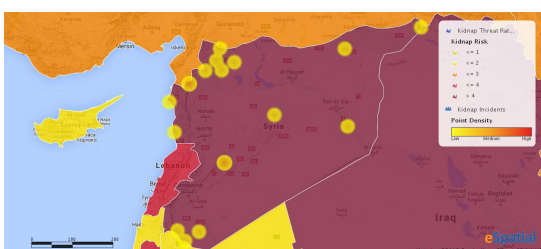
# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## 2016 Forecast

The threat from kidnap in Iraq will remain severe in 2016, including in places previously considered to be safer such as Baghdad and Basra. Shia militias – some of which operate with little or no government oversight – will remain a potent force intent on abducting domestic and foreign nationals to further their political and sectarian agenda. Though IS militants will face significant pressure from the Iraqi forces and the international coalition, kidnappings in areas under their control will likely continue apace.

## Syria – SEVERE

### 2015 Overview



Amid the on-going and increasingly complex civil war the majority of recorded incidents in 2015 were sectarian in nature, however it is likely many involved financial demands. NYA data shows 588 people were kidnapped in 2015, 84 of whom were released. IS militants were responsible for mass kidnappings targeting Assyrian Christians in northern Syria. The Al-Qaeda affiliated militant group Nusra Front was responsible for the kidnapping of Kurdish civilians in the north east of Syria.

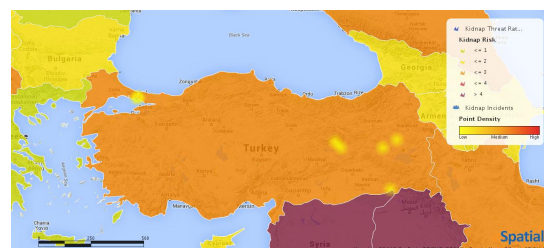
### 2016 Forecast

IS and Nusra Front militants will remain active in carrying out kidnappings as the conflict continues with varying intensity. Increased military involvement by the West in the last quarter of 2015 has impacted negatively on the revenue streams of militant groups. Therefore it is conceivable that incidents of kidnap for ransom in particular will increase as militant groups pursue alternative sources of revenue. The number of sectarian kidnappings targeting minority groups will likely remain high, particularly in the northeast.

## Turkey – MEDIUM

### 2015 Overview

Armed militants in Turkey were responsible for the kidnapping of 13 individuals in 2015, with the majority of incidents carried out by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels. The majority of victims were domestic nationals linked to the security forces. The breach of a ceasefire agreement between the PKK and the government in July led to increased violence, particularly in the southeast. In a notable incident, two Ukrainian tourists were kidnapped for ransom in Istanbul and later rescued.



### 2016 Forecast

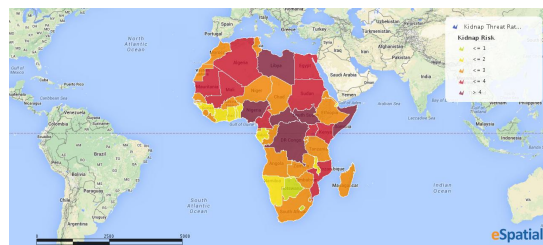
The exacerbated tensions between the Turkish government and the PKK rebels will likely increase the threat of kidnapping across Turkey in 2016. The southeastern regions near the Iraqi and Syrian borders will continue to be a high threat environment to all foreign nationals due to the presence of criminal syndicates and Islamist militants in the area.

# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## Africa

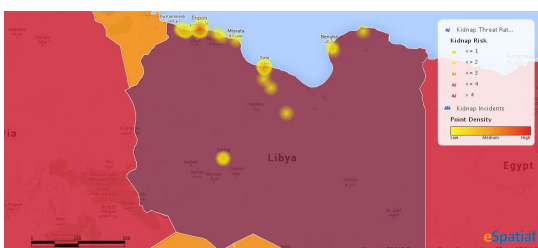
### Regional overview

The expansion of territory controlled by IS militants in Libya and Egypt has worsened the kidnap threat across North Africa. The fragile security situation in the Sahel was also evident, with foreign aid workers targeted in Sudan and South Sudan, and co-ordinated abductions by Islamist militants targeting foreign nationals in Mali and Burkina Faso. In Nigeria, the kidnap threat expanded at varying levels nationwide, with domestic nationals now increasingly targeted.



### Libya - SEVERE

#### 2015 Overview



A divided polity and the absence of any law enforcement underlined Libya's status country-wide as a severe kidnap threat environment for both domestic and foreign nationals. IS militants gained a foothold in and around the central city of Sirte, perpetrating a number of mass abductions and subsequent executions throughout 2015. Hundreds of other kidnappings were reported, the majority in Tripoli and Benghazi, fuelled by political and inter-militia disputes, as well as financially-motivated abductions by relatively low-level criminal groups.

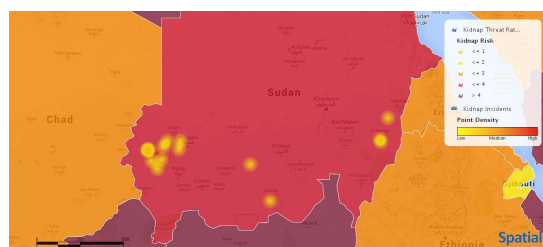
#### 2016 Forecast

The kidnap threat will remain severe for the duration of 2016 owing to on-going political divisions and the current low price of oil, which will hamper any political and economic recovery in the country necessary to establish even a basic level of security. IS will also seek to further enhance their presence in the country and attract recruits by perpetrating high-profile attacks and kidnappings.

### Sudan - HIGH

#### 2015 Overview

Although the rate of kidnapping has decreased, domestic and foreign nationals continued to be targeted in Sudan's conflict zones. The lack of security force capability coupled with widespread lawlessness in Darfur and Kordofan enabled the abduction of numerous civilians and NGO personnel by various groups, including pro-government Janjaweed militia and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). Kidnappings of asylum seekers and refugees in Kassala state have also remained a prime target of Ethiopian gunmen.



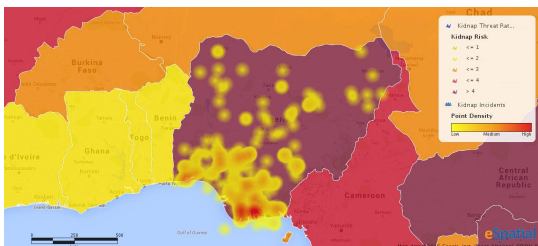
# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## 2016 Forecast

The kidnap threat in Sudan will remain high in 2016 given the high degree of political instability, proliferating civil conflicts and significant criminal activity. Actors including the SPLM-N, pro-government militias and Ethiopian gunmen will be able to continue to take advantage of the weak security force presence to fund their activities through kidnap for ransom.

## Nigeria - SEVERE

### 2015 Overview



The severe threat of kidnapping in Nigeria continued to be driven by Boko Haram's mass kidnappings in 2015. Abductions continued to be predominantly politically-motivated, targeting high-profile domestic nationals. The 2015 elections were notably associated with a spike in abductions of symbolic individuals. There has, however, been an increase in wealthy, prominent victims, indicating a shift towards criminally-motivated kidnappings. The line between piracy and kidnapping became increasingly blurred as wealthy locals were targeted across over 21 incidents.

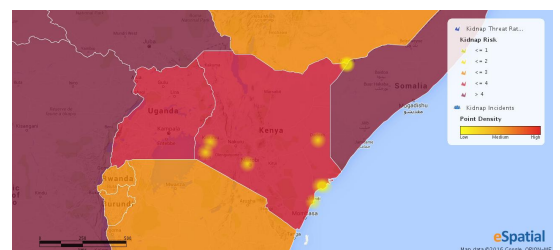
### 2016 Forecast

The threat of kidnapping will remain severe in 2016. On-going Boko Haram operations in the region will maintain the current kidnap threat to foreign nationals in the north-east. Persistently high unemployment rates and poor prosecution rates will likely motivate more to resort to kidnap for ransom as a source of funding. An increase in maritime-based militancy in the south could result in an increase in kidnap for ransom cases involving foreign nationals abducted onshore and offshore.

## Kenya - HIGH

### 2015 Overview

Both foreign and domestic nationals continued to face a high kidnap threat in border areas close to Somalia. Although reports are rare due to fear of reprisals, Al-Shabaab militants and criminal groups regularly conduct kidnappings near porous border areas. The kidnapping of teacher on 12 October from a refugee camp highlights the high threat to NGO workers. Kenya's growing middle class were most at threat, as demonstrated by the August kidnapping of a footballer in Nairobi.



### 2016 Forecast

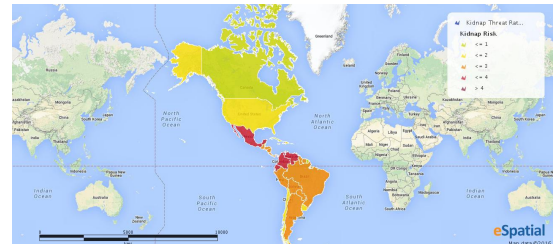
The kidnap threat in 2016 will remain high as the security situation is unlikely to improve due to high crime levels, the presence of domestic Islamist extremist groups and the on-going conflict in neighbouring Somalia. Foreign nationals are likely to be increasingly targeted in 2016.

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## Americas

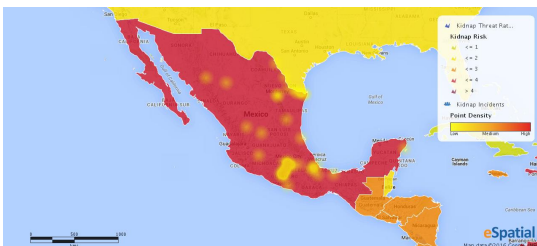
### Regional overview

In 2015 the Americas saw a reduced proportion of global kidnapping incidents compared to previous years. Colombia's progress toward a peace agreement with the region's largest left-wing guerrilla group and security initiatives in Brazil have contributed to these improved results. However Venezuela's rapidly deteriorating economy and Mexico's public distrust in authorities means kidnapping remains a significant regional concern.



### Mexico – HIGH

#### 2015 Overview



The number of reported kidnappings in Mexico decreased in 2015 compared to 2014. According to the Secretary of the Interior, Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong, the number of cases decreased by 27% and coincided with an additional decrease in disappearances. However throughout 2015 Mexico's authorities continued to be entangled in corruption scandals, indicating the decreased number of reported kidnappings may be due to mistrust in policing, not fewer incidents.

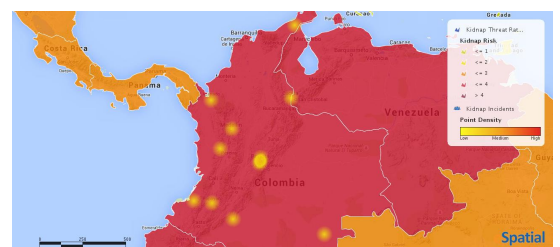
#### 2016 Forecast

Kidnapping will remain a significant threat in Mexico throughout 2016. Despite President Enrique Peña Nieto's short-term political victory of recapturing Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán on 08 January, organised crime groups remain powerful and dominant perpetrators. Additionally, Mexico's high number of street gangs will continue to exploit the country's many overstretched and poorly resourced authorities, which will likely be reflected in repeated high numbers of incidents.

### Colombia - HIGH

#### 2015 Overview

The threat from kidnapping reduced considerably in Colombia in 2015 following continued security improvements. According to official statistics, the number of incidents dropped more than 30% in 2015 compared to 2014, due in part to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)'s decision to cease kidnapping. However other left-wing guerrilla groups, such as the National Liberation Army, continue to use kidnap for ransom to finance their operations.





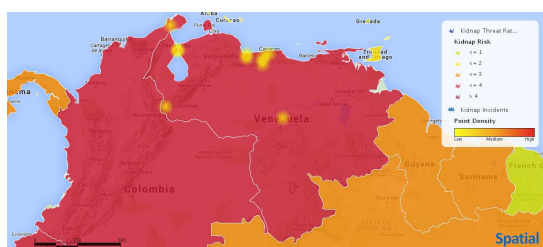
# Global Kidnap Review 2016

## 2016 Forecast

The expected signing of a peace agreement between the government and the FARC in 2016 will likely reduce the kidnap threat in Colombia, since it will allow security forces to invest more resources into combating other left-wing guerrilla and criminal groups that use kidnapping as a source of revenue or scare tactic.

## Venezuela – HIGH

## 2015 Overview



Further deterioration of Venezuela's economic situation increased the number of kidnapping incidents in 2015. Individuals of perceived wealth continued to be the principal target, although those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds were progressively targeted. Throughout the year local media reported a number of incidents in which criminal gangs targeted highly protected people such as military personnel or politicians. Large urban concentrations and the border area with Colombia remained particular kidnapping hotspots in the country.

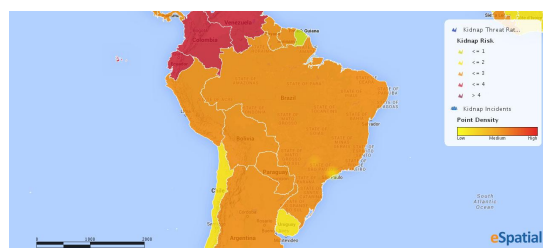
## 2016 Forecast

The kidnapping threat in Venezuela will likely increase throughout 2016 as the economic situation continues to deteriorate. Similarly a probable heightening of political tension throughout 2016 could also have an impact on the kidnapping threat, since it may reduce cooperation among political actors for implementing security policies.

## Brazil - MEDIUM

## 2015 Overview

Official figures showed a decrease in the number of kidnapping incidents throughout Brazil in 2015 compared to 2014. Although the number of incidents declined, Brazil's kidnap threat remained medium, especially in large cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro or Salvador de Bahia. Express kidnapping continued to be the main type of incident, with criminal gangs usually targeting people in middle-class neighbourhoods while withdrawing money from ATMs or exiting theatres, restaurants or shops.



## 2016 Forecast

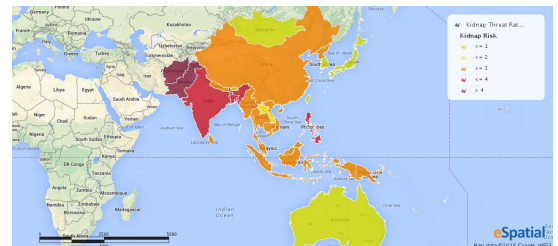
Brazil's kidnap threat will remain medium throughout 2016 despite the government's efforts to reduce the number of incidents before the holding of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The current economic crisis and soaring unemployment will likely motivate a larger number of criminal groups, including opportunistic criminals, to use kidnapping as a source of revenue.

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## Asia

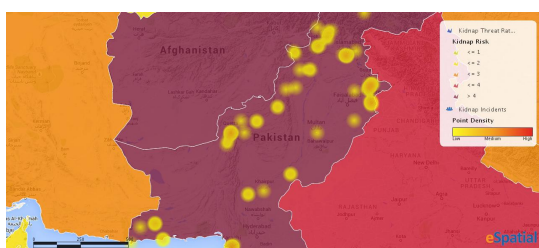
### Regional overview

Kidnapping threats in Asia have varied and evolved between countries, with Afghanistan and Pakistan retaining the most significant threat from criminal and terrorist elements. In the Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf Group has heightened the kidnap threat to foreign nationals in the south, and a potential rise in express and virtual kidnappings in China may stem from the growing use of social media.



### Pakistan – SEVERE

#### 2015 Overview



In 2015 Pakistan ranked among the top five global kidnapping hotspots. Political and criminal motives have driven most incidents nationwide, with terrorist groups continually responsible for abductions particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Local nationals were largely targeted compared to foreign nationals nationwide, and perceived high-net-worth individuals and their dependents were also especially targeted.

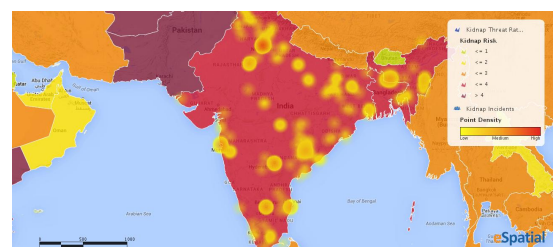
#### 2016 Forecast

Kidnapping is likely to remain a severe threat throughout Pakistan in 2016, with criminals and gangs largely responsible for incidents in major urban areas such as Karachi. Militant groups located in tribal areas will continue to pose a high kidnap threat to foreign nationals, despite reported security operations successfully undermining some terrorist operations in 2015.

### India - HIGH

#### 2015 Overview

Kidnappings in India continued to illustrate the country's dominance as a global kidnap hotspot in 2015. Prominent threats originate from criminals planning intelligence-led abductions as they have demonstrated familiarity with their victims' habits and wealth for targeting. Indian nationals were mainly targeted for financial as well as political demands, most commonly observed in kidnappings by Maoist rebel groups in the east and northeast regions.



#### 2016 Forecast

India is likely to remain a top global kidnap hotspot in 2016, particularly given continued high levels of poverty and corruption in law enforcement facilitating such crime. Express kidnappings were sporadically reported in 2015, and may similarly shape kidnap threats in major cities in 2016. While foreign nationals are generally

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exposed to low kidnapping threats, risks may increase in rural areas where militant groups are active.

## China - MEDIUM

### 2015 Overview

China's medium kidnapping threat has involved largely local nationals and their dependents targeted for ransom. Foreign nationals have been rarely targeted, although commercial and labour disputes may result in foreign nationals being kidnapped but unlikely wounded or killed. Virtual and express kidnappings have risen, with some express kidnappings involving hostages held overnight for cash point machines to reset daily cash withdrawal limits. High threat areas have been concentrated along coastal cities and impoverished inland provinces.

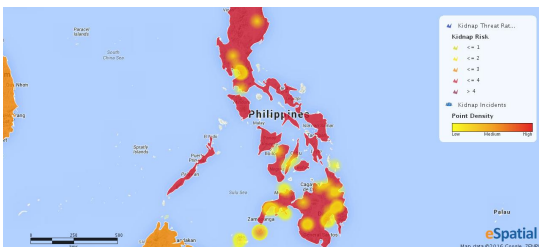


### 2016 Forecast

The kidnapping threat in China is likely to remain medium in 2016, although the economic slowdown and widespread use of social media could increase the threat of virtual and express kidnappings. Inefficiency and corruption within the police forces will remain a prevalent concern, particularly amongst the local population who regularly fail to report incidents of kidnapping for fear of complicity and reprisals from authorities.

## Philippines – HIGH

### 2015 Overview



As Southeast Asia's top kidnapping hotspot, the Philippines' kidnap threat extends nationwide with higher threats apparent in Manila as well as in Mindanao and Sulu. Insurgent and extremist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and New People Army use kidnappings to achieve political motives or fund terrorist operations. While the vast majority of kidnap victims are domestic nationals, the ASG particularly targets foreign nationals for substantial ransom payments.

### 2016 Forecast

The ASG will remain the main kidnap for ransom threat in the Philippines. The abduction of three foreign nationals and a local national from a resort on Samal Island underlines the ASG's expansion of operations to the eastern part of Mindanao. The incident has also exposed the absence of security provisions and vulnerability of foreign visitors at popular island resorts around Mindanao.

## Incident Management Training Workshops

### Incident Management Training Workshops

NYA's one-day incident management workshops provide intensive training on pre-incident planning and response. Run by our specialist response consultants, the workshops train individuals with responsibility for their organisation's crisis response in how to effectively deal with an incident.

In 2016 NYA will be running workshops on: Kidnap for Ransom and Extortion; Maritime Security Threats; and Crisis Management and Communications.

**The agenda includes, but is not limited to:**

- An overview of the global risk
- An interactive simulated incident exercise
- Incident management plan development advice
- Specialist legal advice from partner-level contributors
- Incident prevention and preparedness guidelines
- For kidnap and extortion, contribution from a former kidnap victim

**Events are being held in global locations throughout the year:**

12 April: Houston, USA - Kidnap for Ransom & Extortion  
14 April: Chicago, USA - Kidnap for Ransom & Extortion  
19 April: Washington DC, USA - Kidnap for Ransom & Extortion  
11 May: Singapore - Maritime Security Threats  
24 May: Glasgow, UK - Maritime Security Threats  
25 May: Paris, France - Kidnap for Ransom & Extortion  
28 June: London, UK - Crisis Management and Communications  
Date TBC: Oslo, Norway - Maritime Security Threats

For further information and prices, please contact [info@nyainternational.com](mailto:info@nyainternational.com)



## Company Information

### Information Centre and the Kidnap and Piracy Map

NYA International produces a range of monthly, quarterly and incident-specific situation reports covering both land-based and maritime security events. These are available via our online Information Centre. You can also request access to a live, online version of our Kidnap and Piracy Map – an interactive analysis tool containing open source information on global kidnap and piracy incidents. All are free of charge to approved business subscribers. Visit: [www.nyainternational.com](http://www.nyainternational.com)

### Bespoke reports

NYA International can produce a range of detailed and bespoke reports according to specific requirements. These harness NYA's extensive regional consultant network to provide a timely and accurate assessment of the security risks affecting people and business operations. To commission a report or discuss your requirements contact NYA: [info@nyainternational.com](mailto:info@nyainternational.com)

### Limitation

Our opinion and advice is given on the basis of the information given to us in our instructions and the surrounding circumstances known to us to exist at the time when those instructions are given. We do not accept responsibility for verifying the information or investigating beyond its limits. Subsequent changes to relevant information or to the surrounding circumstances may affect the reliability of our opinion and advice but we do not accept responsibility for that effect. We do not accept responsibility for the outcome of action taken or not taken as a result of our opinion and advice unless the possibility of that action being taken or not taken is set out in specific terms in our instructions.

### About NYA

NYA International is a leading global risk and crisis management consultancy. Since 1990 we have helped organisations to maximise opportunities and operate successfully in complex environments around the world. We help our clients to understand the threats and vulnerabilities to their people, assets and international operations, improve their resilience and effectively mitigate and manage a wide range of security-related problems and crises. NYA has one of the largest specialist response teams in the industry and experience of advising on around 80-100 crisis incidents each year.

### Contact us

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