

A person wearing a grey hoodie is shown from the chest up, with their hands raised in a gesture of surrender or fear. The background is black, and the person's face is obscured by the hood. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Samuel Garrick

AVOID
BECOMING A
VICTIM OF
KIDNAPPING
Through
KNOWLEDGE OF
KIDNAPPERS'
TACTICS

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Oluwatosin whose demeanor and words of encouragement motivated me to remain steadfast in completing this book; to my children whose desire for safety further encouraged me to remain focused to this project.

Preface

Kidnapping is an existential problem and has taken a rather scary dimension in recent times. No day passes without news of at least someone being kidnapped. Victims of kidnapping are not the only ones significantly impacted by experiences of abductions; the society at large also shares in the tension created when someone is kidnapped, or the constant fear of one day becoming a victim. It is a frightening and traumatic experience to be abducted, not knowing what happens next. Overwhelmed and numbed by myriads of emotions, and ones fate hanging on a balance; surge of emotions and blanked-out brain could only mean one thing: erratic behaviours or reactions to the kidnapping episode. While impulsive actions and reactions are understandable in light of being kidnapped, irrational reactions, however, might be prelude to something more sinister which diminishes the opportunity to escape the ordeal.

In all cases kidnapping, 80 percent of what happens to the victims significantly depends on how they react when faced with kidnapping. But considering post-surge emotions that accompany kidnapping experiences, acting appropriately may seem like a pipe

dream because it is almost certain that an average victim would react impulsively and irrationally.

Everyone needs at least rudimentary knowledge about kidnapping to help themselves and other people. This book explores various types of kidnapping and how your actions can be guided by the experiences of those who have passed through similar experiences, and the invaluable contributions of those that have closely worked with abductions issues. The experiences of former victims, families of victims, those that have worked, and still working on kidnapping cases, chart a course of appropriate actions in preventing kidnapping or in the event of falling victim to kidnapping. Every part of the book implicitly and explicitly provides insights on how to prevent kidnapping and in worse case, how to act when faced with kidnapping.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Kidnapping is an age-long social vice that has once more risen to prominence in recent times. It is a common social vice often perpetrated by individuals and/or gangs. It is a global phenomenon without any geographic peculiarity, and perhaps one of the scariest incidents that could ever happen to anyone. It is also probably one of the most unpleasant experiences to survivors and members of their families who struggle to forget the ugly incident years after occurrence. The impacts of kidnapping on the victims, families and friends of the victims are indescribable.

The negative psychological impacts on families and friends of victims who never survived the ordeals of kidnapping could be overwhelming and paralyzing. Post-kidnapping anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress syndrome experienced by the surviving victim, friends and family members may last a lifetime. It is not

comical to be snatched away within split seconds by kidnappers, with our fates hanging on the balance. Various criminal/anti-social activities aimed at subjugating others are clustered under kidnapping.

Kidnappers engage in this nefarious act for a variety of reasons.¹ Regardless of the reason, kidnapping is widely condemned. While some victims are lucky enough to escape and live to narrate their ordeals; sadly, many victims do not survive the horrific ordeals kidnappers put them through. As a criminal offense, it attracts varying degrees of punitive measures across the world.

Kidnapping has the potential to degenerate into other felonious offenses, which is one of the major reasons kidnapping is a major source of concern to governments, law enforcement agencies and members of the society. As an age-long social vice, kidnapping seems to have defied every attempt to eradicate it as it continues to evolve from one form into another. Known and unknown people have always been kidnapped, but the spate of kidnappings in recent time is worrisome, and significantly exceed the rate of kidnapping in the past. It is inevitable for people to be worried with the rising cases of

¹ The reasons are discussed in other sections of this book

abductions all around us. It has become an almost-everyday phenomenon and aggravating by the day.

Available statistics reinforce this narrative. A batch of data obtained from the United Nations show that kidnapping incidents represented 6.9 percent of all terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2010.² Now, kidnapping incidents have jumped to 16 percent of all terrorist attacks.³ None is spared! Both young and the old have already fallen victim to kidnappings thereby putting the society's nerves on edge.

Vast majority of survivors and members of their families suffer indescribable mental trauma, making kidnapping one of the single most traumatic events that cause victims and their loved ones to experience myriads of pains and sufferings. Kidnapping experiences tend to vary from person to person. Varied kidnapping experience is understandable considering the prevalence of certain types of kidnappings in different places.

Although kidnapping is a global phenomenon, it is extremely difficult to accurately estimate the exact number of people kidnapped

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Kidnapping for ransom and terrorism. <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-16/key-issues/kidnapping-for-ransom-and-terrorism.html>

³ Ibid

annually. First reason is unavailability of accurate and verifiable data
Second reason is differences in perceptions about what actually counts as kidnapping. Kidnappings means different thing to different individuals and groups of people. What constitutes kidnapping in one place is common practice in other places. While narratives about ransom-based abductions and the recovery of dead victims' bodies from kidnappers' hideouts have largely shaped public perception; kidnapping is more than ransom payment or killing of the victims. It is true that many people have been kidnapped. It is also true that many victims have met their end in the hands of kidnappers. This, however, does not accurately define kidnapping.

Absence of reliable statistics about kidnapping also adds to the difficulty of accurately estimating the actual number of victims. In spite of this, crude data are provided by various organizations to influence public perceptions and guide actions on kidnapping. Rough estimate of data obtained from credible sources reveal frightening scale of kidnapping across the world. It is estimated that approximately 13,000 people were kidnapped in 2015 alone due to terrorism.⁴ The same source further reveals that approximately 16,000

⁴ Statista. "Number of worldwide kidnappings due to terrorism from 2007 to 2019."
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/250557/number-of-kidnappings-due-to-terrorism/>

people were kidnapped in 2015 as a result of terrorism. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System alleges that more than 600,000 people go missing every year in the US alone. This estimate does not include missing or kidnapped persons in other parts of the world whose stories do not make it to the media.

If the total numbers of people kidnapped around the world are accurately estimated, it won't come as a surprise that millions of people are kidnapped across the globe annually. It is also important to mention that data on kidnapping incidents are mere estimates, which implies that more people are kidnapped than are reported.

Underreporting of kidnapping incidents is understandable considering the fact that most kidnappings are often clandestine in nature, and the several countries lack adequate resources and the willpower to facilitate easy reporting of kidnappings. Faced with the challenges of underreporting and sparse data, conundrum of collaborative efforts to fight kidnapping is predictable. Fighting kidnapping may be quite difficult, it is not impossible.

To effectively prevent kidnapping or act appropriately when kidnapped, it is imperative to understand the meanings of kidnapping. What, then, is kidnapping? The legal definition of kidnapping is to

unlawfully seize and carry an individual away with the use of force or fraud. It also means to seize and detain an individual against their will with the intent of taking them away at a later time in the future. There are instances where people get kidnapped with their consent.

Kidnapping people with their consent doesn't necessarily imply that the victim is a willing partner to the kidnapping. In the face of violence or threats of violence, or possibly death; many victims simply comply with the commands or instructions of the kidnapper thereby making it appear as if the victim willingly consented to the kidnapping. In reality, it is obvious that the victim never assented to the kidnapping, as they are abducted against their will.

While the legal definitions of kidnapping provide the judicial system with the necessary legal instruments to fight kidnapping, legal definitions of kidnapping lack sufficient depth to capture the reality of kidnappings and the harrowing experiences of victims and families of the victims. Based on recurring experiences of kidnappings and current narratives on kidnapping-related incidents, kidnapping is best defined as the deceitful, unlawful and forced abduction of an individual or group of persons with the intention of gaining undue advantage over them in ways that benefit the kidnapper. The "undue advantage" in

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