Issue Brief on Emerging Crimes: The Case of Kidnappings in Kenya Report, 2017

Objective- To ascertain the motives and factors encouraging kidnappings

Methodology- The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study was carried out in twenty (20) counties which were randomly and purposively selected. 1326 (727 males and 599 females) sample respondents (members of public) were conveniently sampled. Key informants were drawn from Judiciary, National Police Service, Office of Public Prosecution, Probation Services, Children Services Department, Civil society organizations interacting with issues of kidnappings and in general Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the information was presented in frequencies, percentage tables and figures. Qualitative data was analyzed by way of interpretation of responses obtained from key informants, victims, kidnappers and reporters from the institutions addressing kidnappings.

Counties of study: *Nairobi, Nyeri, Muranga, Kirinyaga, Mandera, Wajir, Bungoma, Kisii, Siaya, Machakos, Embu, Meru, Nakuru, Migori, Laikipia, Baringo, West Pokot, Turkana, Kwale and Lamu.*

Findings: the study revealed socio-cultural, economic and political factors as the motives behind kidnappings. Revenge (67.5%), sexual gratification (49.3%), punishment (39.9%), child custody issues (22.9%) and cultural purposes (12.1%) were the socio-cultural motives. Ransom payment (87.6%), extortion (51.4%), overcoming and/ or reducing business rivalry (29.5%), protest against economic policies and programs deemed oppressive (4.2%) and competition for resources (3.7%) were the economic motives. Overcoming and/ or reducing political rivalry (63.3%) and protest against political policies and programs deemed oppressive (14.6%) were the political motive for kidnappings.

The study found out that unemployment (81.1%), poverty (72.1%), existence of gangs and militia (38.5%), retrogressive cultural practices (29.7%), instability and conflicts in some regions (29.1%), inefficiency and/ or corruption among some members of the security agencies (28.7%), political competition and rivalry (28.4%), marginalization of some areas (26.6%), proliferation of illegal arms and light weapons (25.4%), competition for control of resources (20.1%), monetary gain (8.4%), repressive/ oppressive institutions (6.1%), drug abuse (5.1%), business rivalry (4.2%), family rivalry (2.0%), public ignorance on anti-kidnapping measures (1.7%) and terrorism (0.8%) were the factors contributing to kidnappings.

Conclusions: motives behind kidnappings are socio-cultural, economic and political. Revenge is the major socio-cultural motive for kidnappings, ransom payment is the major economic motive while overcoming and/ or reducing political rivalry is the major political motive for kidnappings. Factors that encourage kidnappings are unemployment, poverty, existence of gangs and militia, retrogressive cultural practices, instability and conflicts in some regions, inefficiency and/ or corruption among some members of the security agencies, political competition and rivalry, marginalization of some areas, proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons and competition for control of resources. To address kidnappings, there is need to increase job opportunities and other meaningful economic activities especially for the youth.

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