

[EXTRACT]

## British boy Sahil Saeed safe: kidnapping a growing problem in Pakistan

*The abduction of Sahil Saeed highlights a growing problem in Pakistan, a country that security experts believe is among the top five most dangerous countries in the world for kidnapping.*

In 2009, 480 people were officially recognised as 'kidnapped for ransom' in Pakistan, although such figures can be misleading. Often a person will simply be labelled 'kidnapped' if a family member or close friend is involved. Often the kidnapping is set up in three phases - firstly the stake-out and kidnap itself, followed by handing the victim over a middleman. Then they are transferred to a third party who keep the victim, normally in the tribal region, until a ransom is paid.

Regarding Sahil, Rehman Malik, Pakistan's interior minister, said Pakistan "got a bad name and very bad publicity from this" but kidnapping is seen as one of the most widespread criminal enterprises in the country.

Punjab is seen as a particularly vulnerable area. Farzana Shaikh, author of Making Friends With Pakistan, said the abduction was symptomatic of the "extremely weak police force and the general breakdown of law and order in Punjab."

According to security firm red24, kidnappings in the country are carried out by Pakistani militants and separatists, as well as professional criminal groups and on occasion inexperienced individuals.

"Pakistan is in the top five countries in the world for kidnap for ransom incidents," said Lee Niblett from red24, adding: "The majority of kidnappings for ransom, however, involve criminal gangs who normally target local businessmen.

"Although foreign nationals have been targeted, particularly by Pakistani-Taliban, other Islamist militant groups and Baluch separatists, the majority of victims remain local nationals."

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Source: Telegraph.co.uk website (16 March 2010)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/7455003/British-boy-Sahil-Saeed-safe-kidnapping-a-growing-problem-in-Pakistan.html>