



# **General Secretariat of the Council Private Office of the High Representative Security Office**

## **SURVIVING KIDNAP & HOSTAGE SITUATIONS**

The staff member who has been kidnapped can improve their own chances of survival and early release in a number of ways including:

- Your only job is to survive. It is the HQ's job – not yours – to achieve your freedom.
- At the time of your seizure, do not attempt to fight back. The time during and soon after the abduction is the most dangerous. Do not play the hero; do not talk back or act “tough”.
- You may be blindfolded and drugged
- Be calm, quiet and cooperative. Make no sudden movements.
- Try not to give up clothes or identification
- Try not to allow your kidnappers to exchange clothes with you: if there is a rescue attempt you could be mistaken for a kidnapper, and attacked
- Be certain that you can explain everything you have on your person. Do not carry any items that may call into question your motives or status within the mission.
- Fear is a normal reaction. Try to relax, pause, take a deep breath and accept the situation. Focus your mind on pleasant scenes, memories or prayers.
- As the situation stabilises, continue to keep a low profile.
  - Be cooperative without appearing either servile or antagonistic. Follow the instructions of your captors.
  - Be cautious about making suggestions to your captors, as you may be held responsible if something you suggest goes wrong
  - Don't beg or plead, and try not to cry. It is normal to feel humiliated, but do all you can to maintain your dignity.
  - Do not make threats against your captors or indicate that you would testify against them
  - Avoid appearing to study your captors, although if you are able to notice unobtrusively their appearance, dress, and apparent rank structure, this may help the authorities after your release.
  - Be a good listener. Do not argue. Be polite.

- Try to gain your captors' respect and try to build rapport with them. An excellent topic of discussion is family and children.
- Emphasize that as a mission member, you are neutral and not involved in politics
- Encourage your captors to let the authorities know your condition and whereabouts
- Take care of yourself and build a daily routine: exercise, stay tidy and clean, sleep when possible
- Eat and drink even if you are not hungry
- Politely draw attention to anything you need or want, such as food, water, medicine, use of the toilet, books or writing materials
- Be patient and mentally prepared for a long captivity – perhaps months
- Stay mentally active: read, write, exercise your memory
- Do not believe everything you are told
- Do not despair. Your survival chances increase with time.
- Do not attempt to escape unless you are certain you will be successful
- If there is a rescue attempt by force, drop to the floor and keep your hands over your head. Expect to be handled roughly by your rescuers. **DO NOT GET UP UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.** Once the situation stabilises, or when the rescuers ask you to, identify yourself.
- Do not negotiate your own release for a ransom, even if your parents or friends are rich. This would conflict with the negotiations being conducted by your organisation.
- If released peacefully, this can also be a dangerous time. Obey instructions promptly. Make no sudden movements. Stay alert. Be prepared for delays and disappointments.