

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EVALUATING THE SURGE OF
KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM (KFR):
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY IN
EASTERN SABAH**

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR) in Eastern Sabah is a phenomenon conducted by the non-state actors mostly from the southern Philippines who came into eastern Sabah territory to conduct kidnapping for the sake of ransom payments in order to fund their sustainability. Sixteen cases of kidnapping was recorded since 2000 – 2016. This research has divided the cases into three trends which is before ESSCOM establishment from 2000 until 2012, after ESSCOM establishment from 2013-2015, and for the year of 2016 itself. The objective of this research is to identify the factors encouraging KFR in east coast of Sabah and to identify challenges face by ESSCOM as an organization given the responsibility to tackle the KFR phenomenon. The primary data was collected using open ended questions through interviews with four key informants. This research uses the Rational Choice Theory in order to explain the KFR incidents as it believes that the perpetrators of KFR are rational being. The outcome of this research has proven that the surge of KFR in eastern Sabah is due to the ransom payment which have been made to the perpetrators and because of this ransom payment, the perpetrators keep on coming to perform kidnapping in eastern Sabah territory. ESSCOM as an organization which is responsible to combat KFR and other crime and issues especially regarding the illegal immigrant and smuggling activities is not regarded as a failed organizations. Without doubt, ESSCOM has managed to tackle this KFR phenomenon and as a proof, there is no KFR incidents took place in 2017.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

⁴ Kidnapping for ransom, also referred to as economic kidnapping or profit kidnapping, is a predatory crime carried out mostly by criminal organizations, rather than single offenders, usually after careful planning of the various stages of the illegal production process (Vannini, Detotto, & Paoli, 2015).

The motive of kidnapping is always because of money, well known as a ransom (National Crime Research Centre Nairobi, n.d.). Ransom refers to the sum of money extorted by kidnapers and when the amount of ransom is not met, the life of the victim is in jeopardy and maybe killed. This makes kidnap for ransom truly a disturbing act of crime because it involves life and death and a big sum of money gained by the perpetrators.

It can be identified that kidnappings happened in Eastern Sabah can be categorized into two types which are kidnappings happened on mainland or island and high sea kidnappings. The perpetrators are all from the southern Philippines region and are linked to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (Jawhar & Sariburaja, 2016). The ASG was the most notorious militant group in the southern Philippines (Banlaoi, 2010).

¹ There are numbers of revelations of Kidnap for Ransom (KFR) has taken place on the East Coast of Sabah recently. Since the year 2000 until 2016, there have been 19 cases of KFR took place on the East Coast of Sabah (Borneo Post, 2017). Before the establishment of Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) in March 2013, only seven KFR has taken place in East Coast of Sabah involve 39 hostages and among them were not only locals but also foreigners. Since the establishment of ESSCOM, the number of hostages taken into custody are 31 hostages (Malaymail Online, 2016).

In April 2000, 21 hostages were abducted by the ASG in Sipadan island (Gutierrez & Borrás, 2004) and in September the same year, 3 Malaysians were kidnapped from Padanan Island (Malaymail Online, 2016). In 2003, there was only one case of kidnapping have been reported where 3 Indonesian and 3 Filipinos were kidnapped from Borneo Paradise Eco Resort Farm (Malaymail Online, 2016).