On 30 August, the world marks the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances to recognize those who have vanished during periods of conflict and repression. In this infographic, ACLED Research Analyst Curtis Goos examines our latest data on abduction/forced disappearance events around the globe.
A Closer Look at Abductions and Forced Disappearances Across the Globe

The International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August recognizes those who have vanished during periods of conflict and repression. From January 2019 to July 2020, ACLED records more than 3,200 abduction/forced disappearance events around the world. Nearly half of these events occurred in just four countries: China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, and Syria.

**Most Frequently Identified Victims**

- Women: 30%
- Refugees and IDPs: 20%
- Religious and LGBT: 10%
- Local Group: 20%
- Later Group: 10%
- International: 0%

**Perpetrators**

- State Force: 10%
- Political Militia: 20%
- Political Militia**: 40%
- Local group: 30%
- Internal Force: 0%

*ACLED defines abduction/forced disappearance events as those in which an actor engages in the abduction or forced disappearance of civilians, without reports of further violence. Events coded as abduction/forced disappearance involve both short-term and longer-term abductions and forced disappearances. Event rates are updated when a victim is reported to have been released. When a victim is reported to have been tortured or killed, the event is coded as an attack.

**Political Militia includes political Militia, gang, and unidentified/unidentified armed groups according to ACLED methodology.

Frequent kidnappings carried out by an increasingly sophisticated network of gangs and cartel members have targeted groups ranging from government officials to refugees fleeing Central America. Nearly 20% of Mexico’s abduction/forced disappearance events are concentrated in the state of Veracruz, a battleground for cartels seeking to control lucrative drug routes.

Over 10% of all abduction/forced disappearance events in Syria are reported in the northeastern province of Al-Hasakah and the northeastern province of Aleppo, where territory is contested between the Syrian regime, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and the Islamic State. ISKP and the Islamic State are among the most frequently reported victims of abductions/forced disappearances. As a result, thousands of citizens are reported to have been arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and killed by Syrian state forces.

Over three-quarters of the Democratic Republic of Congo’s abduction/forced disappearance events occur in the eastern provinces of Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu, where local militias continue to vie for control over resources and territory. A broad array of militant groups have engaged in the practice of kidnapping for ransom, often targeting local women and children, as well as foreign aid workers.

Human rights activists and defenders are identified in over a third of China’s abduction/forced disappearance events. They are often targeted by state forces seeking to prevent them from expressing their grievances through peaceful means in the central authority. Nearly half of the country’s reported abduction/forced disappearance events occurred in Beijing province.

ACLED is the highest quality, most widely used, real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world. Practitioners, researchers, and governments depend on ACLED for the latest reliable information on current conflict and disorder patterns. Data and analysis are found on acleddata.com.

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