



WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF

KIDNAP AND UNLAWFUL DETENTION

Why this topic?

Instead of being confined to a handful of countries, today international business people, social good volunteers and tourists are now just as likely to be the victims of kidnap or violent attack as missionaries or State Department personnel.

As these dangers multiply, organizations are struggling to adapt.

Kidnapping and unlawful detention is happening almost everywhere, and by groups such as: Border guards, the police, ideological groups, organized crime, local thugs, and many more.

Public policy groups estimate there were more than 100,000 kidnappings around the world last year, including locals and foreigners. Countries with the most reported cases of unlawful detention or kidnapping...

Mexico:

You might be surprised that Mexico and India have higher risks of kidnapping than Iran or the Gaza Strip. In the last decade, kidnappings in Mexico have grown 245 percent, and that's just reported incidents.

India:

Especially for single tourists and females, kidnappings and violent attacks against foreigners as well as local residents have skyrocketed in India in the last decade.

As well as:

Syria/Iraq
Southern Russia/The Caucasus
Venezuela
Afghanistan
Pakistan
The Philippines
Columbia
Brazil
Nigeria
Kenya
Honduras

<http://www.vocativ.com/underworld/crime/places-youre-likely-get-kidnapped-vacation/>

SOME THINGS TO DO NOW:

Prepare yourself! Some risk cannot be avoided.
Read this entire section and consider additional training if you are going to an area of increased risk.

Does the U.S State Department do briefings for in-country personnel? Do they have a page alerting you to possible dangers on their website?

Have you taken a travel safety/travel security course?
Some like Sarus Global are online, affordable and can be taken at your own pace (www.SarusGlobal.com).

Maintain a low profile and a good reputation: Maintain a low profile in public and work to create a good reputation versus an "Ugly American" in dress, behavior, or speech.

UNDERSTAND THE HIERACHY OF SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION found on page 31.



For organizations:

Share information!
With your staff, and with other agencies in the field.
The recent news that MSF did not brief Swedish or Peruvian workers, who were later kidnapped, regarding the kidnapping of Kayla Mueller in country six months earlier is disturbing. While we do not know the details regarding the decision to respect her safety, almost every security organization encourages transparency and frequent updates to keep staff on the ground informed of risk.

Are your actions putting local national staff or their families at risk?

Does your organization have a security policy?
A position on negotiation/ransom? Are signatures on these documents required by staff?

Do you have a hostage/kidnap training program all candidates must go through? A trained emergency contact/point person on your staff?

Defining our terms

- **Express kidnapping**
- **Unlawful detention**
- **Kidnap**
- **Forcible abduction**

Express kidnapping is when a person is taken for a day or two, to deplete bank accounts or max out credit cards, or to enter a PIN at the bank. There may be threats of violence, but the intention is to steal from you, not to keep you.

Unlawful detention or **unlawful arrest** is when you are being held/questioned and not allowed to go on your way even though you have not broken any laws.

This could be a simple bribery attempt, it could be a customs official at the airport, it might be a "shakedown" (aka **threat** or **grave threat**) of your business, being forcibly "closed," or brought in for questioning by the police.

Arbitrary detention is still considered a crime even if by a uniformed officer acting officially or unofficially.

We define **kidnap** as being forcibly or unwillingly taken someplace without your assent, held without knowledge of your location/destination, or ability to prepare/anticipate.

- If you are put into the back of a police car or unmarked car
- If your phone is taken from you
- If guns are drawn
- If you are being yelled at and not answered about your ultimate destination
- If you are not told the purpose of why they are taking you
- If you are drugged or hooded or knocked down or unconscious

Forcible abduction includes *kidnap* or *unlawful detention with lewd or sexual intent*. Crime may still play a part, but the intent is to remove you to another place in order to sexually assault you.

A story from a long-time expat in SE Asia:

A local clan chief influenced local police to arrest me on a trip to visit and assist refugees. It was fortunate that due to the nature of my trip I traveled with a bag that had much of what I needed to "rough it" in that situation.

I had a few changes of clothes, a shrinkable gel pillow and a thin hip-to-shoulder exercise mat (*because I almost always slept on someone's floor when in the refugee resettlement area*).

I always carried a small, but remarkably "maxed-out" first aid kit. It proved immensely helpful because I grabbed it when I was arrested and placed in a very spartan cell.

Though I was not able to take my entire bag into the cell, I was allowed to access it a couple times to get important items.

I had to wash my clothes in a small plastic cereal bowl provided by the police. My cotton clothes took forever to dry in the sweltering cell that had no meaningful ventilation. One pair of Columbia pants made of parachute material proved far more practical.

The exercise mat and pillow made it far easier to sleep on a tile floor. The first aid kit was helpful as the tiles on my cell floor were broken up, and when I paced around the cell to get some exercise the sharp tile shards lacerated my feet.

My meds and bandages helped to stop the bleeding and prevent infection.

Since that ordeal I've switched all the clothes that I wear to ExOfficio rip-stop parachute material—much quicker to wash and dry. And I always carry a good first aid kit that I personally stock (including butterfly closures in order to close gashes in case you can't get to a doctor who could stitch you up).

UNDERSTAND WHEN AND WHERE YOU ARE MOST AT RISK:

- Overwhelmingly, when traveling, and getting into and out of your car or transport
- When entering and leaving the country
- Entering or leaving your residence
- Times of crisis and civil unrest (*Especially after retaliatory U.S. drone attacks, arrests, or hostile press accounts.*)
- At a place you shouldn't be at, or at places frequented by Western staff or tourists
- Out late/after curfew
- Highway routes with checkpoints, unexpected armed checkpoints, tolls, vehicle blockages due to traffic/congestion
- When meeting individuals who are controversial, or are a person of interest by the government
- If criticizing an individual, the government or organization
- Acting in a way that draws additional to yourself moreso than others, behaving or wearing clothing that makes you a target
- Jogging at night or early morning hours
- Acting suspicious, using aliases, having a job that doesn't make sense
- If you are a journalist, foreign aid worker, community health or medical professional, missionary, U.S foreign service staff assigned overseas, international businessperson, a young single tourist, or "wealthy"

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DETENTION/DETAINMENT:

- Political – To stop you To intimidate To expel you Or to warn you to stop
- Lust – Lewd intent/sexual assault
- Theft – Using your credit cards or stealing identity and then released, being forced to go with thieves and enter a PIN, to lure others
- Profit/Ransom – To collect a bribe, to profit a group/faction/entity
- Political + Profit
- Ideological – To discover more about you, local nationals the government considers a threat, to punish, to threaten, to discover why you are really in-country (your motive)
- Protest against government policies, against U.S. policy

FIVE ITEMS TO CONSIDER:

1.) Introductions:

If at all possible, take the initiative to introduce yourself to local, political, and traditional leaders (“corrupt” or not.). Before long they will end up hearing about you anyway, and you won’t be able to control what informers may say about you.

If you already have a face-to-face relationship with them, they will have something firm around which to base their evaluation of you. (This small act of respect has kept people we know from being arrested by Hamas and other groups and in fact opened doors in the face of accusations.)

In traditional societies it is an established and important protocol for newcomers to come present themselves to local leaders. In many places this is slowly passing away, but the leaders remember it and appreciate it. When you respect them, they are more likely to respond favorably. If you honor them in this way, they may speak in your favor, which is important even if they cannot control government agencies or various factions. They can still help shape local attitudes about you.

Since almost every kidnapping (by non-law enforcement officers) begins with surveillance, having respected authorities looking out for you and warning you about people, or asking questions about you, is a very powerful tool to give you warning and stop a possible abduction.

However, be wise.

Sometimes introducing yourself to local power brokers may be “advertising,” letting them know you are a person of influence that they could kidnap, or to have a friendly third party kidnap, in order to get a kickback.

That leads us to the importance of the next two individuals who can help guide you through this process.

2.) A Local Advocate/Lawyer

In the case of NGO staff or a social entrepreneur staying overseas, you should try to identify a defense attorney you would call locally, before too long in that area—especially an area where there’s conflict or obviously intense, or dirty, politics.

We do not fully comprehend or appreciate how political it is to merely offer humanitarian aid.

It is always wise to ask around and identify a good defense lawyer or advocate (if possible, a sympathetic and trustworthy one from the majority faith and culture where you’re working, or from a well-connected family). If you’re working



UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DETENTION AND OF YOUR ASSAILANTS WILL HELP YOU STAY ALIVE.



EMBASSY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



in an area where there's conflict or intense local politics, you probably should invite this attorney out for a meal and establish a face-to-face relationship with them early, before something happens.

3.) A Local "Fixer"

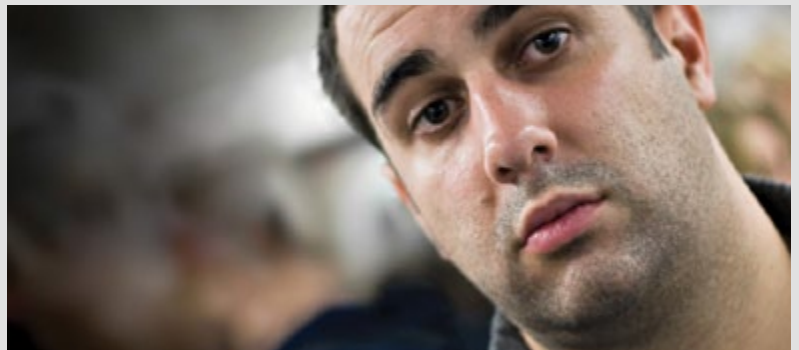
It is also wise to establish a local contact/ "fixer" who can run to government offices for you, avoid lines for required forms, drive for you, and advise you.

Journalists understand the importance of having a local guide and helper to get into (and out of) restricted areas, speak to various parties who might do you harm, use their extensive contacts to open doors or warn you of potential danger. They should be fluent in English so they can help translate in difficult or stressful encounters.

Depending on your location, their services can also be very expensive. Especially if you are competing with foreign journalists and aid agencies (<https://www.cpj.org/reports/2004/10/fixers.php>).

Working as a fixer can be dangerous. They can be seen as a "traitor" due to helping you, and they can become subject to reprisals in their communities (http://www.cjr.org/reports/the_thankless_work_of_a_fixer.php).

In some cases, fixers may need to drive, or take photos in order to have a clear "job" they are hired for. Respect their opinion when they warn you about the consequences of your actions or blowback/risk. Many cases of abduction could have been prevented by heeding their warning.



– Have a cellphone number for these people on you at all times. If people ask, stress that this isn't "my lawyer,"... but "A friend who can help clarify what you need from me/ what I have done, so that I can make things right."

4.) Create a "Bug-Out" Bag or "Grab and Go Bag"

Particularly if you are living overseas. In a situation where you are either arrested by corrupt cops or taken hostage: Overseas most jails will require you to provide for yourself, or for your family to provide for your needs. Therefore, having a "bug-out bag" or "grab-n-go" bag is critical ESPECIALLY if you are unwillingly detained.

See the sidebar from an expat field practitioner in SE Asia
>>[A story from a long-time expat in SE Asia:](#)

"What you need is someone who knows the country's politics, knows the country's history, knows the country's geography...This is something pretty impossible for someone who doesn't speak the language."

– Mohannad Sabry

You should not just consider younger men. Many older, well-respected men in their community will almost become a partner in your work.

Some best practices of hiring and working with a local helper:

<https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/good-questions/global-guides-worldfixers-mike-garrod/>

5.) Consider Kidnap and Ransom Insurance or a Crisis Management policy

Either an individual plan, or as an organization. No one should know about this and in fact, your plan could be cancelled if coverage is disclosed. Understand that some organizations and individuals believe that Kidnap and Ransom insurance, and paying ransom increases the risk to everyone working in that region.

Where you, or your organization, refuse to consider ransom demands, a crisis management/crisis response policy is an option you may want to consider.

WHAT TO DO IF KIDNAPPED / DURING AN ATTEMPTED KIDNAP

If guns are not present or drawn, and you have some idea of your location/safety, RUN. You may be able to evade the perpetrators. Most security experts will say that the best chance to escape a kidnapping is during the initial phase. **RUN AWAY, or go limp, or make a scene to elicit local help.**



Create a scene, Try to elicit help from those around you, yell to others that those confronting you are sex slavers and bad people trying to kidnap you, whatever it takes. Yell for help in the local language.

If that does not work, and you cannot run, immediately fall to the ground while screaming for help.

Being completely limp, it is hard to be lifted or put into a car. It also makes it very hard to get into your pockets quickly. Most kidnapers will not shoot someone lying limp on the ground. Be careful so that you are not run over if they flee via vehicle.

“Going limp” and making them wrestle with each limb, to drag you into a vehicle, is often a much better response than trying to fight off abductors.

The most dangerous time is at the very beginning – Emotions, risk, being handled and transported from one place to a more secure place, when adrenaline is flowing. It is counterintuitive, but the more time that passes, the better your chances of surviving.

Once abducted or held, try to stay as calm as possible and assess your risk. Aggression now will most likely result in harsh treatment, lack of food or other forms of retaliation.

EACH SITUATION WILL BE DIFFERENT:

Establish rapport. Be rational. Be assertive without incurring violence. Avoid being baited into talking politics, or religion, or the “rightness” of their actions. Understand that the people holding/detaining you, may not be in charge. While they can make your captivity easier, they may not have the power to let you go, or to negotiate.

UNDERSTAND THE HIERARCHY OF SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION

Assess the seriousness of the situation and what the perpetrators want. This may evolve over time.

UNDERSTAND THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE:

- Threatened? With Violence?
- How many people detaining you?
One, several, an organization with hierarchy?
- Are guns present? Guns drawn?
Guns aimed at you?
- Language – Calm? Yelling? Anger directed at the USA? At you? At something you did?
- Is violence implied or evident? Actual Physical Violence? Physical contact? Grabbing? Pulling?
- Violence against others trying to help you?
- Response to resistance? Dragging? Punching? Hands over face?
- Hooded, masked, drugged?
- Handcuffed? Hands tied?
- Is the violence to control, or to abuse/hurt?
- Are there continued threats of violence:
To create fear, or make you responsive?
- Do they act on their threats? How quickly?
- Continual violence against you?
- Have they acted out against others?
Violently? Deadly?
- Have they acted out against other Americans?
Violently? Deadly?
- Someone else in charge? Do they fear them? ■

SOME HOSTAGE ADVICE

Once apprehended or taken away from the public

- Cease struggling/fighting if outnumbered, or if they have weapons or represent the law.
- If detained or kidnapped as part of a group, become a "gray person"—neither resistant nor overly submissive.
- Do not draw attention to yourself.
- If you are the leader, take charge and let those holding you know that you represent the group and ask what you can do to make the situation bearable.
- Negotiate on behalf of the group to eat, use restrooms, better their living conditions, etc. *Willingness to allow restroom use, give you playing cards or a radio, a Bible or reading material, or better food or sleeping accommodations reflects a willingness from your kidnappers (or the government) to keep you unharmed, and helps you understand the motivations and the strictness of instructions given by your captors/those in charge.*
- Get everyone's names, place of work, nationality, health requirements/health conditions, length of captivity, where taken from, so that you can tell (on the phone, in a letter) loved ones or hostage negotiators, who is being held and their condition.
- Let the kidnappers know about any special medical conditions or needs.

- Catch on to captors' names, ask for small favors.
- Show appreciation when favors are granted.
- Help them see you as a person, not as a thing or a dollar amount. *Being on a friendly, talking basis could save your life. You don't have to like them, to do so. Your situation is temporary. Getting to know your captors is one way to stay alive.*

More "do's" and "don'ts"

- Do not give out the names of others, or other organizations and their work, residences, or any other information that could put them at risk. *Captors may trick you by offering release if you tell all you know about co-workers, their families, or the professions of family members back home.*



- Asking "What did I do?" may help you understand if you were simply taken for money, or for religious reasons, or because of your company.
- Do not try to speak the local language. *It will only get you into trouble. Even if you truly don't understand more than a few words they will think you are holding out on them.*
- Keep to a daily routine. Keep clean. Exercise.
- Do not sign "confessions" (especially in another language). Do not appear in videos (that can be edited or altered, or used against your wishes).

If police/soldiers come rescue you:

- Remember hands up/hands where they can be seen, and get down/lie down/go limp. *Rescuers are trying to sort through good guys/bad guys, threats and non-threats.*
- Running will get you shot.
- Understand you may be handled roughly at the beginning. Do not try rushing up to hug them during a raid.
- Do not stand up or yell anything.
- Go down. Stay down. Until told otherwise.
- Someone will verify your identity and help you. Be patient. ■



Understanding soft forms of unlawful detention/kidnap:

- Drugs/Sedation/Date Rape Drugs – *Not just against women, but increasingly used against political opponents, tourists, and expatriates (See article in this guide).*
- A public taxi driver or “friend” taking you someplace you did not ask to go.
- A group wanting to learn more about you or wanting you to meet their leader, or to issue a warning.
- A person offering/insisting on “helping.” Assistance you do not want. *And will not take ‘no.’ as an answer.*
- Being politely requested to appear, but having no option to reschedule/set another time.

Or not allowed to bring someone or to call someone to alert them.

Every time you are asked to appear, or go with an officer or official (and it appears that you are not allowed to reschedule), you should be prepared to be unlawful detained.

In every case, we recommend you negotiate to appear another time, and immediately notify others while they wait, even if over the phone, and even at the risk of their displeasure.

You should always try to arrange bringing along a “local friend.” You should insist on bringing a “grab-and-go” bag.

You should ask “How long?” “Where?” “Who is requesting me to appear?” and make sure this information is conveyed over the phone to another person before you assent to go with them.

This might still be coercion on their part, but at least you are better prepared, since you might be held or questioned for up to several days.

Hopefully, you will be allowed to leave soon. ■

From Anonymous:

When being called in for questioning or if the official looks “sleazy,” always seek to have a local person with you, or others in a group with you, and strongly, respectfully, insist on not meeting privately in another room or behind a closed door if you feel uncomfortable in the situation.

Respectfully ask for your statement to be taken at the Embassy or at your residence with others present later that day. In every case, you should forcefully refuse to go. I would immediately call someone to notify them unless they take my phone from me. Too many people have disappeared and too many women have been raped behind a closed door.

Do not settle into a routine. Most victims are caught unaware. Always vary your method of getting to work or your home, even if you have a driver.

Be especially careful when traveling at night, traveling alone, traveling with visible smartphones, valuables, traveling wearing clothes or hats that mark you as a foreigner.

Most crimes/violent crime against expats or tourists happens late at night and near red light districts, clubs, bars, and party areas.

From Mary and Ed Fox:

Talking regularly with local people also helps to keep us up on local and national events. Sometimes asking specific questions helps, such as, “Have you heard how the roadwork is going” or “if they’ve cleared that landslide yet?” “Do you think demonstrators plan to block the road tomorrow?”

The American Embassy occasionally sends out information of that nature, but it is usually too late to be of much help. Bulletins aren’t sent out on weekends or holidays, either. In short: “Listen to the local/national news and be in communication with local people, as well as with others who might be able to provide useful information.”

From Ron Weinert:

Treat EVERYONE with whom you come in contact with the respect you would like to receive. Seldom am I disappointed by doing so.

Everyone deserves statutory respect. Everyone has something good to offer. Be on your guard, but do not be suspicious. There is a difference.

Kindness and being friendly goes a long way. Even beggars deserve some consideration. Sure, they may be scamming, but sometimes just might help. Vices in the country may be dependent on the situation.

From Brent Knipper:

I am American and have lived in Egypt since 1993, and I would say the most common thing I tell Americans who are thinking about coming to Egypt is to not be afraid to come. The media sensationalizes isolated events which gives the impression it is unsafe here. So I say, “Come, and come expecting warm hospitality in response to your optimistic expectation.”

I have found 99% of visitors who came expecting warm hospitality found what they were expecting.



DATE RAPE DRUGS

NO MORE

GHB, ROHYPNOL, KETAMINE

DRUGS ARE NOW BEING USED AGAINST TOURISTS AND POLITICAL OPPONENTS OVERSEAS

“Date Rape drugs” and “drug-facilitated sexual assault” are no longer just a concern for women. Worldwide these drugs are being used against all sorts of travelers.

“Date rape drugs” are named as they are because they leave individuals unable to protect themselves. Both sexes should be aware that these drugs are being used to help people commit crimes such as robbery and physical assault, even “express kidnapping,” where hostages are taken for a day or two at most, just long enough to deplete their bank accounts or max out their credit cards.

These drugs are odorless, colorless and tasteless and can be added to ANY drink — even water. The three most common date rape drugs are Rohypnol® (flunitrazepam), GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid), and Ketamine, although Clonidine and Chloral hydrate are also popular across Russia and Eastern Europe.

ARE THERE WAYS TO TELL IF I MIGHT HAVE BEEN DRUGGED AND RAPED OR ROBBED?

- It’s not just alcohol, but travelers are being poisoned with spiked coffee, water or soda, sometimes in restaurants and cafes. Often in resort areas, high-class clubs and hotels.
- Most victims don’t remember being drugged or assaulted. The victim might not be aware of the attack until 8 or 12

hours after it occurred. Or may only realize it due to a loss of time or when your bank cards are rejected due to having reaching maximum limits. This is especially dangerous if you have told your bank you will be traveling and using your cards overseas as they may not stop payment when seeing lots of charges.



- India has come under special attention the last few years as cases of sexual assault and robbery have increased as well as use of these drugs.
- Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Persian Gulf nations are fast becoming magnets for date rape as Western hotels and nightclubs draw western tourists.
- More recently cases of local women and prostitutes drugging Western businessmen in order to rob them have been on the increase. The real number of victims is high but few men report the crime due to fear of exposure cheating on their

wives or girlfriends, and due to overall embarrassment. The U.S. State Department is aware of the problem and has issued warnings for both men and women.

Russia is notorious for using ingestible drugs in the past to either knock someone out or make them violently ill so that they miss meetings with dissidents, or to search their rooms or luggage.

One more reason to be careful eating/drinking in Russian Hotel restaurants or dance clubs.

These drugs cause amnesia, extreme intoxication and sedation. After consuming the drug(s), the effects start to kick in after 20 or 30 minutes. You'll start to feel as if you're very drunk, have difficulty speaking/moving, and may eventually pass out.

PROTECT YOURSELF:



It is very easy for someone drugged by one of these substances to appear intoxicated. A local scammer or the secret police will use the occasion to explain to other patrons that they are escorting you to a taxi, or up to your hotel, often while appearing as your friend. Then, they will proceed to rob or kidnap you.

Victims will often stumble out with their attackers willingly. And not be able to recall their features or their own actions later.

- Do not accept any drinks handed to you from staff or strangers that you did not see the bartender or waiter prepare themselves.

IN ADDITION:

- Avoid going out at night especially to clubs/red light districts
- Request sealed bottled water that you open yourself
- Be wary if anyone offers to go to the bar to get you a drink
- Do not accept opened water bottles from helpful taxi drivers or on public transport
- Never leave your drink unattended
- Hold your glass with your hand over the top
- Bottles are much harder to drop drugs into than a glass
- Never go out on your own without friends
- Never accept a ride from the opposite sex or a “group of friends” of the opposite sex
- Realize that drinking alcohol in itself lowers your ability to reason well and protect yourself. ■

Yuri V. Tatarinov, spokesman for the Moscow Crime Directorate, has said “*There are so many crimes in general that nobody cares how many cases [like this] there are. We have a lot of other problems.*” The use of date rape drugs, and also “Mickey Finns” such as chloral hydrate has increased so much in the last few years that it has become a routine hazard of life in Moscow.

A package containing enough clonidine to knock out 10 men cost less than \$1.20. Most clonidine victims do not require hospitalization, and Russian doctors and ambulance drivers are so familiar with the symptoms by now that no special attention is given to victims.

Since these ‘club drugs’ have no color, smell, or taste, people often do not know that they’ve taken anything. They are especially dangerous overseas where pharmaceuticals and drugs are easily accessible and large dosages used.

Travel Safety 101

A guide to staying safe overseas

- Introduction to travel safety
- A "real" travel checklist
- Unlawful detention
- What to do in case of kidnap
- Date rape drug use against tourists
- Staying safe on the street
- The most corrupt nation on earth?
- Emergency evacuation: What you need to know
- Open WiFi and security: About VPNs
- Surviving an attack
and more thanks to
Good Neighbor Insurance
and the following partners:

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Azimuth
Risk Solutions



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