



## AFRICA-POLITICS: RWANDA'S REVENGE

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LIMA, Jul. 10 (IPS) -- Peruvian psychiatrist Mariano Querol read books with and counseled his kidnappers, one of whom he now calls "el amigo" (the friend). Referring to the psychological phenomenon known as the "Stockholm Syndrome," he says his case could be seen as an example of the "Lima Syndrome."

"When victims sympathize and identify with their captors, it is called the Stockholm Syndrome, which is a phenomenon taken into account in negotiations in kidnapping cases," says Querol, released last weekend after 18 days in captivity.

"I personally established that the phenomenon also affects the captors, who can be led to sympathize with their victims -- something we could dub the Lima Syndrome."

The Stockholm Syndrome was named after hostages taken during a bank robbery in Sweden protected their captors during a police rescue operation. One of the victims even married one of the bank robbers. Another famous case was that of Patty Hearst, the daughter of the U.S. newspaper tycoon, who not only fell in love with her kidnapper but joined up with him and his gang.

Querol's kidnapping stands out among a recent wave of abductions in Lima that has led the government to pass a special anti-kidnapping law.

The case differs from the other 68 kidnappings carried out over the past seven months, which ranged from high-profile abductions of businessmen to improvised operations, usually involving teenage girls driving fancy cars, who were freed after a few hours in exchange for whatever cash their families pulled together.

The actors in the Querol case were also atypical. The victim was a 71-year-old respected professional not known for his wealth, while his four middle class captors were headed by a businessman anxious to dig himself out of debt.

The 43-year-old businessman, Gonzalo Higuera, was a neighbor of one of Querol's children. His taxi company was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Immediately after receiving the ransom, Higuera paid his rent, the overdue tuition on his children's boarding school and several other debts.

Querol forged a special relationship with his captors. Together they read Colombian Nobel literature prizewinner Gabriel Garcia Marquez' latest novel "News of a Kidnapping." "They were excited to see that the circumstances of the operation they had prepared were similar to those described in the novel," Querol said.

And "el amigo," Querol's main keeper, ended up consulting the psychiatrist about his own anxiety over the kidnapping.

"After two days, I decided to extend a bridge to encourage dialogue. I told them I did aerobics every morning and asked them to tune the radio to dance music...I suppose they thought it was pretty funny watching me dance salsa or rap.

"I later asked for books and a special diet -- nothing too complicated, just more vegetables. I read a few books, and reread others. We also chatted and watched TV together in the two-by-three meter room where I was being held.

"My keepers didn't know who I was at first. They found out by reading the papers. When they saw the press gave me so much attention, one of them told me, 'we're making history'."

Querol has requested reduced sentences for his captors, arguing that they did not use violence.

The psychiatrist's relationship with his keepers perhaps saved his life. Similar cases in which amateur kidnappers do not wear masks often end with the death of the victim after the ransom is

paid because of the captors' fears of being identified.

"I controlled my fears, telling myself they needed me alive to get the \$150,000 ransom. When I found out they had arranged the exchange with my family, I was really scared."

Higuera, whose identity had been discovered before Querol was released, was captured a few hours after picking up the ransom and settling his debts, as he was getting ready to board a plane to northern Peru.

"While I laid on the floor of the car, 'el amigo' repeatedly told me 'don't worry doctor, I guarantee nothing will happen to you'...But he was sweating profusely, and I felt his legs shaking. When they left me in the street, 'el amigo' gave me 20 sols for a taxi."

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