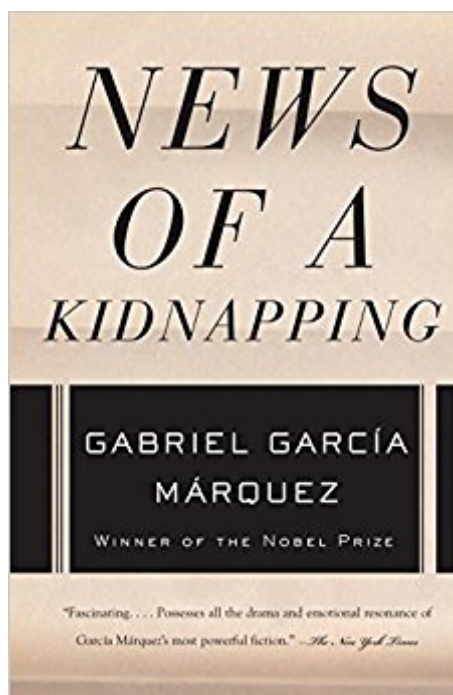


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# News Of A Kidnapping (Vintage International)



## Synopsis

In 1990, fearing extradition to the United States, Pablo Escobar — the head of the Medellín drug cartel — kidnapped ten notable Colombians to use as bargaining chips. With the eye of a poet, García Márquez describes the survivors' perilous ordeal and the bizarre drama of the negotiations for their release. He also depicts the keening ache of Colombia after nearly forty years of rebel uprisings, right-wing death squads, currency collapse and narco-democracy. With cinematic intensity, breathtaking language and journalistic rigor, García Márquez evokes the sickness that inflicts his beloved country and how it penetrates every strata of society, from the lowliest peasant to the President himself.

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## Customer Reviews

During the 1980s, the government of Colombia signed a treaty with the United States allowing for the extradition of Colombian citizens. This caused a great deal of distress among the kingpins of the Medellín drug cartel. Why? Traffickers like Pablo Escobar had spent the decade exporting billions of dollars' worth of cocaine. They weren't likely to be arrested at home, but if extradited and tried in America, they would spend the rest of their lives in prison. Escobar and his colleagues tried to cut a deal with the government. Then Escobar decided that a little extralegal pressure--i.e., terrorism--could do no harm. In short order he had 10 prominent Colombians kidnapped; most were journalists, and all had professional or personal ties to the pro-extradition movement. Ultimately two

of the hostages were shot. The remaining eight were released in a trickle, as the drug traffickers began to break ranks and surrender. So ended at least one episode in what Gabriel García Márquez calls "the biblical holocaust that has been consuming Colombia for more than twenty years." García Márquez was originally invited to write about the kidnapping by Maruja Pachon, who spent six months in captivity. As he began to write, however, he realized that her story was inseparable from that of the other nine victims. The result is a meticulous, sobering, and suspenseful book. It is, of course, a work of reportage, which puts a lid on the author's penchant for magic realism. But in the hands of a writer like García Márquez, truth makes fiction look paltry indeed. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

García Márquez, Latin America's Nobel prize-winning novelist, turns his hand for the first time to nonfiction to explain, through one individual's experience, the widespread kidnapping in Colombia. Although focusing on Maruja Pachon's six months in captivity and her prominent husband's efforts to obtain her release, the book is really about the 1990 abduction of ten individuals by drug traffickers hoping to prevent their extradition to the United States. As he does so memorably in his fiction, the author captures the political intricacies and strange, deep involvement of drug dealers in Colombian life, turning what as easily could have been an imagined story into a fascinating exploration of contemporary culture, politics, and drug lords. Highly recommended. Roderic A. Camp, Latin American Ctr., Tulane Univ., New Orleans Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Marquez, in his work, provides us a particularly fascinating read into the psyche of a people oppressed by the unpredictable violence of the narco-terrorism and kidnappings that had defined existence for many Colombians - particularly those in Medellin and the capitol - during the "reign" of Pablo Escobar and his drug empire. With his journalistic background, Marquez adeptly tells the story of a number of well-connected families with strong political ties to the Colombian government's regime whose members had been kidnapped during the war between Escobar's "Extraditables" and the government's security forces. In great detail Marquez portrays the plight of the kidnappers, the victims, the politicians, the common people, and the media - and enjoins the reader to understand that during this time in Colombian history the whole nation was imprisoned by a consciousness of fear and unpredictability which is hard to comprehend for those of us who have been blessed to live in a more peaceful moment of history. Interestingly, the book has recently gained attention in the international media after Iranian opposition leader Mir Hossein Mussavi, who had been placed

under house arrest for the past six months by the current Iranian regime, stated, "If you want to understand my situation, read [Marquez's] *News of a Kidnapping*." Since this public announcement, the book has become one of the best-selling in Iran's recent history. And this is not just because the book delivers a powerful portrait of forced captivity such as that which is likely endured by Mussavi; but there's a wealth of much wider political messages that permeate this eloquent work of historical significance. Early on, as the reader is introduced to the main players in this drama, we learn that both Pablo Escobar and his nemesis, Maza Marquez (who is the chief of the special police in charge of capturing and possibly killing him and his "Extraditables"), both invoke the same saint for protection against each other's aims. After Marquez narrowly escapes death at the hands of Escobar's forces, the author states that "Maza Marquez escaped unharmed on both occasions, attributing this to the protection of the Holy Infant - the same saint, of course, to whom Escobar attributed his not being killed by Maza Marquez." The irony here is not lost on the peoples of shared faith around the world whose countrymen wage violent and/or oppressive war against each other in the name of God; and the irony is certainly not lost on the Iranians for whom shared faith is such a strong part of their culture. In another passage, describing the besieged people of Medellin, where the scars of the drug war have yet to completely heal, Marquez states, "Perhaps the most Columbian aspect of the situation was the astonishing capacity of the people of Medellin to accustom themselves to everything, good and bad, with a resiliency that may be the cruelest form courage can take. Most did not seem aware that they were living in a city that had always been the most beautiful, the liveliest, the most hospitable in the country, and in recent years had become one of the most dangerous in the world. Until this time urban terrorism had been a rare element in the centuries-old culture of Columbian violence. The same historical guerilla groups who now practiced it had once condemned it, and with reason, as an illegitimate form of revolutionary struggle. People had learned to live with the fear of what happened, but not with the uncertainty of what might happen: an explosion that would blow up one's children at school, or disintegrate the plane in midair, or pulverize vegetables at the market. Random bombs that killed the innocent and anonymous threats on the telephone had surpassed all other causes of anxiety in daily life. Yet the economy of Medellin was not affected in statistical terms." What Marquez describes as "most Columbian" could possibly describe more accurately what's most global (and particularly Middle-Eastern) about terrorism - its ability to mollify and harden a people, and forget the beauty of their culture and history in light of imminent threats against domestic security. Even the most beautiful cities of the Orient - from Baghdad to Kabul to Tehran - have all been exposed to the Medellin story, and their respective citizens have had to display that "cruelest form of courage" to

endure even in the light of constant threats of violence. In short, *News of a Kidnapping* is an extremely relevant work for those interested in comparative cultural studies, international affairs, drug wars, terrorism, and understanding the mindset of a people who face unpredictable violence every day. Yet the work provides the world hope - hope that by reading history - whether in Iran, the US, or wherever it's read - that we can work hard not to repeat its most detestable moments.

i little slow and probably would be really interesting if you knew what else was going on at the time.

Very interesting look at the Escobar terror period. Journalistic but very engaging

The true account of several hostages kidnapped by Pablo Escobar and the efforts made on their behalf to free them. Written in a journalistic style, which I like, it documents the difficult experience for the people involved and takes the reader through the politics of the time. I gave it 4 out of 5 stars because it was difficult to follow at times, having no prior knowledge of the political system. Overall, I would recommend it, as the book gave me a clearer picture of the struggles this country faces against the powerful drug cartels.

The story was well written and translated. It was so interesting to read about the kidnappings from the perspective of those who lived through the unfortunate events

The kidnappings and protracted negotiations around Escobar's surrender are brilliantly told. An amazing story that I'm amazed I didn't know about before reading the book.

Well written.... I could not put it down

What an amazing story! And to have it told by Garcia Marquez. This is the true story of a series of kidnappings that took place in Colombia a decade ago. Unfortunately, it seems that this story could be told again this year, with a new set of victims. Garcia Marquez tells the story from various of the kidnappers perspective, and he keeps it organized so the reader can follow along and understand what is happening to each of the victims, their families, etc. This is a must read for anyone interested in Colombia, Latin America, or contemporary issues in general. I know I'll be re-reading it again.

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