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US and Australian academics abducted at gunpoint in Kabul

By Divya Kishore

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Two foreign academics have been abducted in the capital city of Afghanistan, Kabul. An Australian academic and an American professor — were kidnapped from the city on Sunday night (7 August), Kabul police chief Abdel Rahman Rahimi said.

According to reports, both were working at the American University of Afghanistan and were kidnapped at gunpoint by unidentified men who came dressed as National Security officers. However, some reports claimed that the abducted foreigners were doctors at a Kabul hospital, located near the place from where they were kidnapped.

The Australian embassy in Afghanistan was investigating the matter and trying to verify the reports, a spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs said.

The US State Department said in a press statement, "We are aware of reports of a US citizen kidnapped in Kabul. Due to privacy considerations, we have no information to offer."

Founded in 2004, the university is a private, not-for-profit institution. It is modelled on the American curriculum and standards and has received millions of dollars from the US Agency for International Development. The university has over 1,000 students.

The kidnapping of the two professors came close on the heels of the abduction of an Indian woman, Judith D'Souza, in Kabul. She was abducted by a group of gunmen in June; however, she was rescued in July, following efforts of the Indian government.

In April, an Australian aid worker was kidnapped in the city of Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan.

Last week, Afghanistan's Taliban attacked a foreign tourist convoy injuring six passengers and their Afghan driver. The group of travellers included eight Britons, three US citizens and one German.