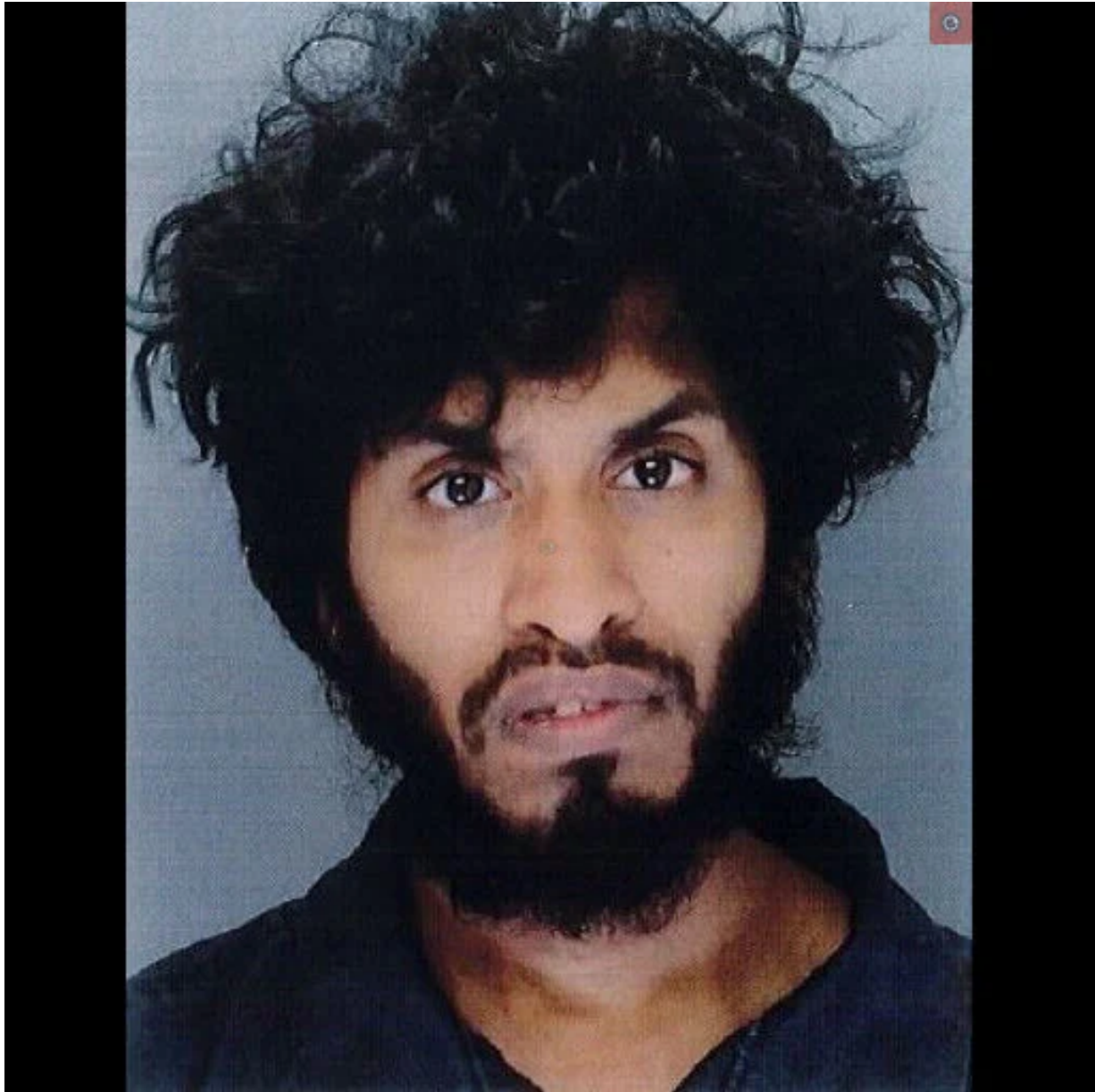


This Man Faked Mafia Kidnapping to Steal \$126,500 in Ransom



A man staged his own abduction by supposed Mafia members, complete with videos showing guns held to his head, to extract over \$125,000 from his victims. Joshua B. Fernando, 27, of Salisbury Township, has been sentenced to prison after pleading guilty to orchestrating the elaborate international fraud scheme.

An Elaborate Hoax While On A Trip To Europe

Fernando claimed he was kidnapped during a European business trip in May 2024 after being involved in a car crash with an "expensive, bullet-proof vehicle" owned by a UK Mafia boss. The fabricated story escalated as Fernando sent increasingly disturbing evidence of his supposed captivity.

"I'll be killed unless you pay," Fernando told his victims in messages sent from what appeared to be European locations. In reality, he was using a virtual private network (VPN) to disguise his actual whereabouts while crafting his fictional abduction scenario.

He Made Himself Look Beaten Up And Staged Fake Videos

The 27-year-old went to extraordinary lengths to make his kidnapping appear authentic. He sent photos showing his bruised and swollen face to the victims, suggesting he had been beaten by his captors.

Fernando's deception included multiple videos depicting him being assaulted and abused. In one particularly disturbing video, he was shown on his knees with a masked man standing behind him, pressing a gun against his head.

Victims Lost Over \$100,000

The elaborate ruse initially worked. Concerned for Fernando's safety, the victims sent a total of \$126,500 to secure his supposed release from Mafia custody.

However, Fernando's scheme began to unravel when he repeatedly requested additional payments. The victims, growing suspicious of the ongoing demands, contacted police in London and the United States Embassy in the United Kingdom.

After claiming to be "released" by his captors, Fernando told victims he had returned to the United States but was again being threatened by Mafia members. This escalation prompted the victims to report the situation to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The FBI confirmed what the victims had begun to suspect – the entire kidnapping was fabricated. Pennsylvania State Police joined the investigation as Fernando's elaborate fraud scheme collapsed around him.

Investigators located Fernando in Lancaster County as he attempted to withdraw \$130,000 from his bank account. A search of his phone revealed conversations between Fernando and his alleged "captor" discussing how to make the ransom videos appear more realistic.

On February 10, 2025, Fernando pleaded guilty to one felony count of theft by deception. The court sentenced him to six to 23 months in prison, to be followed by two years of probation.