

'Nigerian' scams increase in Syria

Due to the complex political situation and ongoing conflict in Syria, new ['Nigerian' scams](#) have become apparent.



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According to Kaspersky Lab data, recent months have seen [a surge in the number](#) of Nigerian letters that contained some sort of reference to Syria. Spammers sent messages in the names of representatives from banks, humanitarian organisations as well as private individuals.

The scam messages, made to look like they come from reputed Syrian and UK banks, state that some of their clients would like to transfer their multi-million savings from their accounts because of the unrest in Syria, and were looking for a partner who would help them do so. Naturally, those that reply are guaranteed a reward. The scammers usually provide a contact phone number and the personal email of the "bank client" allegedly looking for a partner.

After a recipient shows an interest and responds to the message, the scammers ask him to transfer a small amount of money to pay for the mediator's services, and then disappear.

Posing as members from Red Cross

In some case, the scammers have posed as members of the International Red Cross, telling the sad story of an oil trader who died in the Syrian conflict, and whose fortune was saved by a Red Cross employee. The sender then asks for help in transferring and looking after the money. The recipient is told a parcel will be sent containing the millions in cash. The recipient is promised half of the money if they help and is given a personal email address for contacting the scammers.

Some of the emails detected by analysts at Kaspersky Lab appear to have been sent using the names of "ordinary" Syrians, and had a variety of themes. In one, a "teacher from Syria" asks recipients to help orphaned children who have inherited a large sum from their parents to leave the country and invest the money. Other 'Nigerian' letters also came from allegedly critically ill people who want to donate some of their money and ask the recipients for help in doing so.

Risk of being cheated

Tatyana Shcherbakova, senior spam analyst at Kaspersky Lab, commented: "We came across very brief messages in which the author merely wanted to get to know the recipient better. The texts of the messages made frequent use of words such as 'turmoil', 'crisis' or 'revolution'. Having got the recipient's attention, the scammers play on people's natural desire for easy money and to help people in distress. Users shouldn't respond to these types of emails because once you are in communication with a 'Nigerian' scammer, you risk being cheated."

According to the data in Kaspersky Lab's [spam report for September](#), Asia (59%) remained the leading regional source of spam - its contribution increasing by 4 percentage points from the previous month. Asia is followed by North America (20%), whose share grew by 2 percentage points, and Eastern Europe (12%), whose share fell 2 percentage points.

Western Europe (4%) and Latin America (2.4%) complete the top five rating.

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