

The Issue of Human Rights Violations by North Korea

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On 15 November, 1977, Megumi Yokota was abducted by North Korean spies on her way home from Yorii Junior High School in Niigata city, Niigata when she was 13 years old.

I felt surprised that a 13-year-old child, junior high school student, was suddenly abducted one day by North Korea. I also felt fear that the crime of abduction could suddenly happen on the way home from playing badminton, something that is familiar to us in our daily life. Abduction is an act that tears into pieces not only the life of the individual who is abducted but also the lives of their family members and various other people who are related to the abductee. It is not only a crime but also human rights violation. I felt angry.

The abductions issue begins with North Korea's intention of turning South Korea into a socialist country and unifying the Korean Peninsula. For that reason North Korea abducted Japanese people to use as instructors teaching Japanese customs and the Japanese language to North Korean spies who then pretended to be Japanese. Were there no other available methods other than abducting Japanese people? Why did they have to abduct Japanese people of various occupations simply to teach their spies the Japanese language? The abductions occurred entirely because of the selfish reasons of North Korea.

There is something called the Treaty on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The treaty today guarantees the dignity and rights of people with physical, intellectual and mental disabilities. I also have a disability, but in Japan and around the world the rights of disabled people are protected. In other words, our human rights are protected. I once researched the history of the human rights of people with disabilities like me. In Japan, even after the start of the Meiji Period, people with disabilities were considered useless to the nation and an unnecessary presence in society. After the Second World War, the introduction of legal measures began, and people with disabilities like me finally had their human rights protected, resulting in the society we have today where everyone can live their own lives in a manner appropriate for them.

A society that does not protect human rights is I think harsh, frightening and a struggle to live in.

I wonder what Megumi Yokota, who was abducted to North Korea, is feeling now? I think that today, in 2018, she is still feeling the same anger as people with disabilities like me felt through history when our human rights were continually ignored. Is she not discriminated against and suffering?

I have a younger sister. If she, like Megumi Yokota, were one day suddenly abducted by North Korea, I would even by myself, demand that North Korea return my sister. That is why we should not simply wish that Megumi Yokota "is in good health" or "can safely come home", but all of us throughout Japan need to demand that North Korea "return Megumi home right now".