

【英語エッセイ部門】【最優秀賞】

Abduction is not just a matter of Japan and North Korea: It is a global issue
(拉致は日本と北朝鮮だけの問題でなく、グローバルな問題)

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North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals have long been an outstanding issue between the two countries. According to the Japanese government, 17 Japanese citizens are identified as abduction victims. Five of them were repatriated in 2002 after then-North Korean leader Kim Jong Il admitted to the abductions. The abductees are allegedly compelled to train North Korean spies with the Japanese language, customs and culture. Abduction is a deprivation of human rights and freedom, and it reflects Pyongyang's contempt toward humanity and the international community.

Amid a lack of tangible progress of the issue, Japan lost one of the strongest advocates this year. Shigeru Yokota, the father of Megumi Yokota who was kidnapped by North Korean agents at age 13 in 1977, passed away. He and his wife, Sakie Yokota, called for the return of their loving daughter and other abductees for more than 40 years which left a significant impact in Japan and the world in terms of disseminating information about the North Korean abduction. I could never imagine the pain Mr. and Mrs. Yokota suffered for not being able to see Megumi for so long.

In the absence of diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea, I think that reinforcing coordination with the United States, China and South Korea, countries that can influence North Korea, is vital for pushing forward the issue. Recognizing the North Korean abduction as a "global issue" and putting stronger international pressure on the country could force North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to resolve this human rights violation. As Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in his video address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 26, we have no time to lose as the families of the victims continue to age. Prime Minister Suga also said he is ready to meet with Mr. Kim "without any conditions."

As a minor, what I can do for the abduction issue may be limited. However, I believe that delivering messages of the tragedy through this essay and discussing with my friends and other youths abroad could enhance awareness of the issue. Encouraging people to closely watch Pyongyang's development of nuclear weapons and missiles, which pose a threat to the international community, is also important to promote understanding on what kind of a country North Korea is.

Since I spent a part of my childhood in Beijing, I have a great interest in Japan's relations with China and diplomatic issues in broader Asia. I also like South Korean entertainment culture, so I have been studying the Korean and Chinese languages in addition to English. I believe learning the Korean language is a good way to know North Korea's perspectives on the abductions of Japanese nationals, regional security, and other issues. I would like to continue such studies so I can hopefully contribute to a resolution of the abduction issue.