

Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea

—Awaiting the Day When We Will Be Reunited—



Back in Japan



Back in Japan



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April 2006

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

At the Japan-DPRK (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) summit meeting held in Pyongyang on September 17, 2002, the North Korean side, after many years of denial, acknowledged for the first time that it had abducted Japanese citizens, offered an apology and pledged to prevent any recurrence. To date, the Government of Japan has identified 16 Japanese citizens as victims of abduction by North Korea, five of whom returned to Japan on October 15, 2002 for the first time in 24 years. At the second Japan-DPRK summit meeting held in Pyongyang on May 22, 2004, Chairman Kim Jong-Il promised that five family members of the victims of abduction by North Korea who were repatriated in October 2002 would return to Japan. In addition, it was agreed that the North Korean side would immediately conduct a thorough reinvestigation from scratch in order to gain a full account of the whereabouts of the abductees whose safety remains unknown. Despite these commitments, there has still been no persuasive explanation forthcoming from North Korean authorities concerning the safety of the remaining abductees.

The Government of Japan, based on the premise that all abductees whose safety remains unknown are still alive, has strongly urged the North Korean side to immediately return the victims to Japan, provide a full account of the victims and hand over those responsible for the abductions. The Government of Japan has also made clear its determination to take stringent measures if a satisfactory response from the North Korean side is not forthcoming.

1 Background

During the 1970s and 1980s a considerable number of Japanese citizens disappeared in unnatural circumstances. Investigations by the Japanese authorities and the testimonies of exiled North Korean agents revealed that many of these incidents were likely to be abductions by North Korea. From 1991 onwards, the Government of Japan took every opportunity to raise the issue with North Korea, but the North Korean side persistently denied all allegations.

Within Japan, campaigns for the rescue of the victims gathered force, which led to the formation of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea in 1997. A petition containing over five million signatures in support of the cause was presented to the Prime Minister. In addition to the 16 abduction victims identified by the Government of Japan, the authorities are carrying out necessary investigations and inquiries into other cases since the possibility of abduction by North Korea cannot be ruled out. Should any new cases be newly discovered to be abductions, these will be taken up with North Korea.

Possible motives for this unprecedented act of state sponsored crime by North Korea are thought to be as follows: identity theft for North Korean agents; coercing victims into teaching North Korean agents to act as Japanese; and recruitment by the "Yodo-go group" which is still being harbored in North Korea. (The "Yodo-go group" includes those who hijacked Japan Airlines Flight 351, commonly known as "Yodo-go," on March 31, 1970, and their family.)

2 Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting (September 17, 2002)

At the Japan-DPRK summit meeting on September 17, 2002, the North Korean side, after many years of denial, acknowledged for the first time that it had abducted Japanese citizens. The North Korean side notified that of the 13 abductees whom the Japanese side had demand the whereabouts of, four victims were still alive, eight had died and one had never entered North Korea, offered an apology and pledged to prevent any recurrence. North Korea also acknowledged the abduction of one person not previously under investigation and confirmed that this person was still alive. (However, in response to subsequent inquiries from Japan about the mother of this surviving victim, who went missing at the same time, the North Korean side claimed that there was no evidence that this person had entered North Korea.)

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi strongly protested to Chairman Kim Jong-Il, urging that investigations be continued, survivors returned to Japan and an end put to abductions. Chairman Kim Jong-Il acknowledged the abductions and apologized. He pledged that those involved would be punished, and that there would be no recurrence. He also promised to facilitate meetings between the victims and their families and their return to Japan.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK made a public statement on the abductions and indicated that the North Korean side was ready to allow the victims to return to Japan.



Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea is formed



Association of the Families is collecting signatures to gain public support

3 Dispatch of Investigation Team of the Government of Japan

(September 28 to October 1, 2002)

The Government of Japan dispatched an Investigation Team from September 28 to October 1, 2002, which met with surviving victims and made efforts to collect information on the persons not yet accounted for. However, the information provided by North Korea was limited and contained many inconsistent and dubious points. At the negotiations aimed at the normalization of relations between Japan and the DPRK held from October 29 to 30, 2002, the Government of Japan posed 150 questions of inconsistency and requested further information. There was, however, no comprehensive response from the North Korean side.

4 The Return to Japan of Five Victims

(October 15, 2002)

In response to a request by the Government of Japan, on October 15, 2002, the five victims returned to Japan and were reunited with their families.

Based on a decision that the victims should be provided with an environment in which they were free to determine their own future and that of their families who were still in North Korea, the Government of Japan announced on October 24, 2002, that the five victims would remain in Japan. The Government also strongly called on North Korea to ensure the safety of the family members still in North Korea and promptly set a date for their return to Japan. Subsequently the return to Japan of the family members and the investigation on whereabouts of the victims whose safety remains unknown became one of the most significant issues in Japan-North Korea relations.

5 Second Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting

(May 22, 2004)

To reconfirm the undertakings stipulated in the Pyongyang Declaration agreed at the Japan-DPRK summit meeting in September 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited North Korea again on May 22, 2004, and engaged in discussion concerning issues between Japan and North Korea, including the abductions, and also on security issues, including nuclear and missile issues. With regard to the abduction issue, the two leaders agreed to the following points in the summit meeting.

The North Korean side agreed to allow the five family members of Kaoru and Yukiko Hasuike and Yasushi and Fukiie Chimura return to Japan on May 22. (The three members of Ms. Hitomi Soga were strongly encouraged to return to Japan directly by the Prime Minister, but it was decided that they should be reunited as soon as possible in a third country. This was achieved in July 2004 in Indonesia and the entire family subsequently returned to Japan on July 18.)

The North Korean side would promptly resume investigations from scratch in order to provide a full account of the abductees whose safety remains unknown.



Japanese victims back in Japan after twenty-four years

6 Japan-DPRK Working-Level Consultations

(August 11 to 12, September 25 to 26, November 9 to 14, 2004)

The first and second Japan-DPRK working-level consultations were held in Beijing from August 11 to 12 and September 25 to 26, 2004 respectively. In the consultations held in September the North Korean side stated that they had used the "150 questions" posed by the Government of Japan as reference and provided intermediate information on the course of the investigation on the abductees whose whereabouts remain unknown. The Japanese side underlined that the information provided by the North Korean side lacked concrete evidence and references to support the information. The Japanese side also pointed out that the results of the investigation were inadequate, since the explanation given by the North Korean side included only fragmented, preliminary information.

Based on the exchanges outlined above, the third Japan-DPRK working-level consultations took place in Pyongyang from November 9 to 14, 2004. From the perspective of dispatching a delegation that fully reflected government knowledge and competence, members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Division for the Assistance of the Abductees and their Families of the Cabinet Secretariat, and officials from the National Police Agency attended the consultations. In addition,

in a format responding to a request from the Japanese side, the North Korean side attendees were officials involved in the "investigation committee" over which Jin Il Bo, Bureau Chief in Charge of Investigations, Ministry of People's Security presides. The consultations lasted for more than 50 hours and in addition to questions and answers directed at the "investigation committee," direct hearings with a total of 16 "witnesses" were conducted. In addition, on-site inspections of facilities and other locations related to the abductions also took place.

Moreover, with regard to the issue of the missing people whom the Government of Japan has not acknowledged as abductees but who might have been abducted by North Korea, Japan gave the North Korean side the names of five people and asked to provide information related to them. Japan also requested the swift provision of further information on abduction as and when it should come to light without specific requests having to be made by the Japanese side. However, the North Korean side responded that it had been unable to confirm that the five people had ever entered North Korea's territory.

After the return to Japan of the Japanese delegation, the Government of Japan immediately implemented a close examination of information and evidence presented by North Korea at the working-level consultations. The results of the examination were informed to the families of the victims on December 24, 2004, and an overview of the results was made public.

The following day, December 25, through the "embassy channel" in Beijing, the Government of Japan made a diplomatic representation outlined below and conveyed a document recording it, in addition to handing over the results of the close examination and the analysis results of the so-called "remains" of Ms. Megumi Yokota.

(a) A close examination was made of information and evidence received at the time of the third working-level consultations, and there was no corroborative evidence to the explanation from the North Korean side that "eight persons had died and two persons were not confirmed as having entered North Korea." This explanation is not acceptable and the Government of Japan strongly protests the lack of sincerity in the response by the North Korean side.

(b) The information and evidence provided by North Korea to date are not at all satisfactory to provide a full account of the abductees whose safety remains unknown. It is impossible to call this "a thorough investigation from scratch," and there are many dubious points. The analysis results showed that DNA from different persons was detected in part of the "remains" North Korea claims as belonging to Ms. Megumi Yokota.

(c) The Government of Japan has strongly urged the North Korean side to provide a full account of the abductees whose safety remains unknown at the earliest possible date and to return the survivors without delay to Japan. The Government of Japan intends to take stringent measures if a swift and sincere response from the North Korean side is not forthcoming.



The Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting in Pyongyang on May 22, 2004

On January 26, 2005, the North Korean side provided a "Memorandum" dated January 24 to the Japanese side through the "embassy channel" in Beijing, in which it included its comments on the analysis and results made by the Japanese side on the so-called "remains" of Ms. Megumi Yokota. In the Memorandum the North Korean side called for the return of the "remains," and on February 10, the Government of Japan issued a rebuttal to the Memorandum, strongly demanding the immediate return to Japan of the surviving victims and the provision of a full account of the issue. The same demands and information have been conveyed by the North Korean side on February 24 and April 13, which have been rebutted by the Government of Japan, pointing out the objectivity and scientific nature of the analysis results once more.

7 Identification of Mr. Minoru Tanaka as the 16th abduction victim (April 27, 2005)

Due to new evidence being acquired concerning the incident in June 1978 in which a man from Hyogo Prefecture went missing, the police judged that the owner of a restaurant in the City of Kobe, a North Korean person residing in Japan, after receiving directive from North Korea, cajoled Mr. Minoru Tanaka (then 28 years old) who frequented the restaurant, to go overseas, after which he was sent to North Korea. Given this judgment, on April 27, 2005, the Government of Japan convened an intergovernmental conference on the victims of abduction cases by North Korea, and identified Mr. Minoru Tanaka as a victim of abduction. As a result, the number of cases of abductions by North Korea that have been identified by the Government of Japan is 11, and the number of victims is 16.

8 Japan-DPRK Comprehensive Talks (February 4 to 8, 2006)

On two occasions, in November and December 2005, Governmental Consultations between Japan and DPRK were held after a break of approximately one year. Based on an agreement reached at these consultations, the Japan-DPRK Comprehensive Talks (consultations on issues of concern including the abduction issue, consultations on security issues, and the normalization talks) were held in Beijing from February 4 to 8, 2006. Consultations on the abduction issue lasted a total of approximately 11 hours and Japan once again strongly demanded the repatriation of living abductees, a promise from North Korea to launch a new investigation aimed at revealing the truth about what happened, and the handing over those responsible for abduction (Sin Kwang-Su, Kimihiro Uomoto, Kim Se-Ho).

In response the North Korean side repeated the same explanation it has given before to the effect that "all of the living abductees have already returned to Japan." Regarding a renewed investigation, the North Korean side insisted that it had investigated the matter in good faith, stood by the results of that investigation, and did not even promise to continue investigations into the whereabouts of the abductees that are still unaccounted for. Regarding the handing over, the North Korean side insisted that it was a political issue and refused to hand them over.

So no concrete progress toward resolution of the abduction issue was seen from the North Korean side. In addition the North Korean side asserted that seven Japanese nationals involved in activities to assist defectors from North Korea were in violation of the domestic laws of North Korea and demanded that they be handed over.

9 Identification of those Responsible for the Abductions (2002-2006)

On February 23 2006, the Japanese authorities identified a North Korean agent Sin Kwang-Su (or Shin Kwan-Soo) to be responsible for the abduction case of a couple in Fukui Prefecture, and a North Korean spy who called himself Kenzo Kosumi, commonly known as Choi Sun-Chol (or Choe Sun-Chol) to be responsible for the abduction case of a couple in Niigata Prefecture, and issued their arrest warrants which were instantly put on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan demanded North Korea to extradite them to Japan. (Refer to case 5 and 6 on page 6)

With regard to the other abduction cases by North Korea, the Japanese authorities has since August 2002 issued arrest warrants for Sin Kwang-Su, North Korean agent, who was also responsible for the so-called "Sin Kwang-Su case", Kimihiro Uomono (formerly Abe), one of the suspects of Yodo-go hijack case, who was responsible for the abduction case of a Japanese woman in Europe, and Kim Se-Ho, North Korean agent, and the main suspect of the Ushitsu case, and put all of them on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan has continued to demand North Korea to extradite them to Japan. (Refer to case 1, 10 and 11 on page 6-7)



Photographs of those responsible for the abductions, whose handover Japan is requesting North Korea (from left to right; Sin Kwang-Su, Kimihiro Uomono, Kim Se-Ho, and Choi Sun Chol).

10 Recognition of the International Community and the Government of Japan's Basic Policy

The abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea is a grave and clear violation of human dignity, human rights and basic freedom. This basic view is confirmed in the "Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights for three consecutive years beginning in 2003. Furthermore in December 2005 the "Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" was adopted by a plenary session of the UN General Assembly for the first time. The resolution of the General Assembly expressed deep concern regarding the human rights situation in North Korea, including the issue of the abduction of foreign nationals, and called on North Korea to cooperate with the UN to improve its human rights situation.

In February 2005, Mr. Vitit Muntarhorn, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea, visited Japan and worked vigorously to collect information on the current status of this abduction issue by meeting with the family members of the abductees and other means. In a report issued by the UN in September 2005 on the human rights situation in North Korea, the Rapporteur recommended that North Korea take measures to provide redress with respect to the unlawful acts it committed, including abductions of foreign nationals,

through effective and expeditious procedures. (Meanwhile, North Korea has not offered to cooperate with the investigation, for instance, by allowing the Rapporteur to visit the country for the investigation.)

Furthermore, the Government of Japan has raised the abduction issue on various diplomatic occasions, including international conferences like the G8 summits, and meetings between heads of state, and has been gaining the understanding and support of various countries. At the Gleneagles Summit in July 2005, for instance, Japan stressed the importance of comprehensively resolving the various outstanding issues including the abduction issue, and gained the understanding of the G8 members. As a result, the following statement was incorporated into the Chair's Summary: "Action is also long overdue for North Korea to respond to the international community's concern over its human rights record and the abductions issue."

The testimonies by the abductees who returned to Japan have revealed that North Korea abducted not only Japanese people but also those from Thailand, Rumania and Lebanon. This fact is provoking renewed international as well as domestic concern over North Korea.

Various countries have also expressed their understanding towards the abduction issue. For instance, the 2004 annual terrorism report of the Government of the United States of America, as in the 2003 report, refers to the abduction issue of Japanese citizens and notes that North Korea has not taken substantial steps to cooperate in efforts to combat international terrorism.

At the Six-Party Talks held among Japan, the US, the Republic of Korea, China, Russia, and North Korea regarding its nuclear issue, the Joint Statement adopted in September 2005 incorporated the basic policy of Japan that unless outstanding issues of concern including the abductions are resolved, there can be no normalization of relations with North Korea. It was stipulated and has become one of the objectives of the Talks that Japan and North Korea will take steps to normalize their relations, on the basis of resolving the outstanding issues of concern including the abduction issue.

The importance of resolving the abduction issue and the Government of Japan's efforts to that end have the clear support of the international community.

Abduction is an extremely important issue that affects the lives and safety of the Japanese people, and unless the outstanding issues of concern are resolved, there can be no normalization of relations with North Korea. In line with this policy, the Government of Japan, through various opportunities including the Japan-DPRK Comprehensive Talks, will continue to strongly urge the North Korean side to immediately return the survivors to Japan to provide a full account of the abductees whose safety remains unknown, and to hand over those responsible for the abduction.



Cases of Abduction by North Korea Involving

Below is an overview of the cases involving 16 people whom the Japanese Government has identified as victims of abduction by North Korea (numbers and places in parentheses indicate the ages of victims at the time of their abduction and the site of their abduction).

1 September 19, 1977: Ushitsu Case

● Victim: Yutaka Kume (52, Ishikawa Prefecture)



- Disappeared from the coast of Ushitsu, Ishikawa Prefecture.
- North Korea denies all knowledge of Mr. Kume ever having entered the country. In January 2003 the Japanese authorities issued an arrest warrant for North Korean spy Kim Se-Ho, the main suspect in this case, and put him on the international wanted list. The Japanese Government has demanded that North Korea extradite Kim Se-Ho to Japan. In Japan-DPRK Comprehensive Talks held in February 2006, the North Korean side said that it has "no knowledge of this person [Kim Se-Ho]" and stated that if Japan provides the North Korea with all the relevant information it will conduct an investigation in order to identify him.

4 Around June 1978: Lee Un-Hae Case

● Victim: Yaeko Taguchi (22, unknown)



- Kim Hyon Hui, a North Korean spy convicted of the bombing of a Korean Air Lines airliner in November 1987, claims to have learned how to act like a Japanese person from a woman named "Lee Un-Hae." It is thought that this "Lee Un-Hae" is the missing Ms. Taguchi.
- North Korea reported that Ms. Taguchi married Mr. Tadaaki Hara (Refer to case 10) in 1984 and, immediately after Mr. Hara's death from illness in 1986, was killed in an automobile accident. However, North Korea has provided no material or evidence supporting these claims.

2 November 15, 1977: Abduction Case Involving a Young Girl

● Victim: Megumi Yokota (13, Niigata Prefecture)



- Disappeared on her way home from school in Niigata city.
- In the third Japan-DPRK working-level consultations held in November 2004, North Korea said that Ms. Yokota died in April 1994 and handed over her "remains." But the analysis results showed that DNA belonging to other people was detected in part of these "remains."

5 July 7, 1978: Abduction Case of a Couple

● Victims: Yasushi Chimura (23, Fukui Prefecture) (upper photo)
Fukie Chimura (nee Hamamoto) (23, Fukui Prefecture)



- Disappeared after saying they were going out on a date on July 7, 1978
- The couple married in 1979 and returned to Japan in October 2002. Their daughter and two sons returned to Japan on May 22, 2004. In February 2006, the Japanese authorities issued an arrest warrant for North Korean spy Sin Kwang-Su, who is responsible for their abduction and put him on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan is demanding that North Korea extradite him to Japan.

3 Around June 1978: Abduction Case Involving a Former Restaurant Worker

● Victim: Minoru Tanaka (28, Hyogo Prefecture)



- Disappeared after departing Japan for Europe in June 1978.
- The Japanese Government urged North Korea to give information at the 12th round of the Japan-DPRK normalization talks held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2002 and the third rounds of Japan-DPRK working-level consultations held in 2004. In the third Japan-DPRK working-level consultations, North Korea said that Mr. Tanaka had never entered North Korea.
- Since Mr. Minoru Tanaka was identified as an abductee in April 2005, the Japanese Government has been requesting North Korea to immediately return him, and to give a full account of the case, but has received no response to date.

6 July 31, 1978: Abduction Case of a Couple

● Victims: Kaoru Hasuike (20, Niigata Prefecture) (upper photo)
Yukiko Hasuike (nee Okudo) (22, Niigata Prefecture)



- Mr. Hasuike failed to return home on July 31, 1978, after saying that he was going out briefly. Similarly, the then Ms. Okudo disappeared after going out.
- The couple married in 1980 and returned to Japan in October 2002. Their son and daughter returned to Japan on May 22, 2004. In February 2006, the Japanese authorities issued an arrest warrant for the North Korean spy commonly known as Choi Sun-Chol, who is responsible for their abduction, and put him on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan is demanding that North Korea extradite him to Japan.

16 Government-Identified Abductees

7 August 12, 1978: Abduction Case of a Couple

● Victims: Shuichi Ichikawa (23, Kagoshima Prefecture) (upper photo)
Rumiko Masumoto (24, Kagoshima Prefecture)



- Disappeared after saying they were going to see the sunset at the beach on August 12, 1978.
- North Korea reported that the couple married in July 1979, but that Mr. Ichikawa died of a heart attack in September that year and Ms. Masumoto died of a heart attack in 1981. However, North Korea has not provided any material or evidence supporting these claims.



8 August 12, 1978: Abduction Case of a Mother and Daughter

● Victims: Hitomi Soga (19, Niigata Prefecture) (upper photo)
Miyoshi Soga (46, Niigata Prefecture)



- Disappeared after saying they were going shopping on August 12, 1978.
- Ms. Hitomi Soga returned to Japan in October 2002. Her husband (Mr. Charles Jenkins, a US citizen) and two daughters arrived in Japan in July 2004.
- North Korea says that Ms. Miyoshi Soga never entered the country.

10 Mid-June 1980: Sin Kwang-Su Case

● Victim: Tadaaki Hara (43, Miyazaki Prefecture)



- Disappeared in Miyazaki Prefecture.
- North Korean agent Sin Kwang-Su has confessed the abduction of Mr. Hara to the Republic of Korea authorities. In August 2002 the Japanese authorities issued an arrest warrant for Sin Kwang-Su, who is responsible for the abduction, and put him on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan is demanding that North Korea extradite him to Japan, but North Korea is showing no sign of doing so; rather it is honoring him as a "hero."
- North Korea has reported that Mr. Hara married Ms. Yaeko Taguchi (Refer to case 4) in 1984, but died of hepatic cirrhosis in 1986. North Korea has not given any material or evidence to support this claim.

9 Around May 1980: Abduction Case Involving Two Japanese Males in Europe

● Victims: Toru Ishioka (22, Europe) (upper photo)
Kaoru Matsuki (26, Europe)



- Both disappeared whilst living in Europe in 1980. A letter sent by Mr. Ishioka in 1988 to his family in Japan (bearing a Polish postmark) indicated that he, Mr. Matsuki and Ms. Keiko Arimoto (Refer to case 11) were all residing in North Korea.
- North Korea claims Mr. Ishioka and Ms. Arimoto died in a gas poisoning accident in November 1988, but has given no material or evidence to support this claim. North Korea reported that Mr. Matsuki died in an automobile accident in August 1996. In the third Japan-DPRK working-level consultations held in November 2004, North Korea handed over the "remains" possibly belonging to Mr. Matsuki, but the analysis results showed that DNA from other people was detected in part of these "remains."

11 Around July 1983: Abduction Case of a Japanese Woman in Europe

● Victim: Keiko Arimoto (23, Europe)



- Disappeared in Europe.
- The former wife of a Yodo-go member responsible for the abduction acknowledges that Ms. Arimoto was abducted with the cooperation of the North Korean authorities. In September 2002 the Japanese authorities issued an arrest warrant for Yodo-go member Kimihiro Uomoto (formerly Abe), who is responsible for the abduction, and put him on the international wanted list. The Government of Japan has demanded North Korea to hand him over, but it has not responded to this request.
- North Korea reported that Ms. Arimoto and Mr. Ishioka (Refer to case 9) died in a gas poisoning accident in November 1988, but has not given any material or evidence to support this claim.

**Abductions of
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—Awaiting the Day When We Will Be Reunited—



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

2-2-1 KASUMIGASEKI CHIYODA-KU, TOKYO 100-8919 JAPAN

tel: +81-3-3580-3311 <http://www.mofa.go.jp>