

## SPECIAL EDITION

Dear friends of the Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle,

In 2006, The Government of Japan (GoJ) designated December 10–16 as North Korean Human Rights Abuses Awareness Week. For this edition of the newsletter we will cover the issue of Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea. We hope that the information and resources below can help to further the international community's awareness and understanding of the Abductions Issue by the international community, with the aim of safely bringing all remaining abductees back to Japan to be reunited with their families.

This is a special edition of our "From Japan to the Northwest" newsletter. Our regular bi-monthly schedule will resume from December 15. You can find [current and past issues of the newsletter here](#).

### 1. Overview of the Abductions Issue



The formation of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea  
(Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

During the 1970s and 1980s, a string of incidents occurred involving the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea. The Government of Japan has so far identified 17 Japanese citizens as victims of abduction.

In September 2002, North Korea admitted that it had abducted Japanese citizens and apologized, while promising to prevent any further recurrences. In October of that year, five abductees returned to Japan. As for the rest of the Japanese abductees, Pyongyang has yet to provide any acceptable explanations, despite North Korea's explicit commitment at the Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting in May 2004 to immediately resume thorough investigations to obtain a full account. North Korea's assertions regarding the abductions issue have not provided any satisfactory account or convincing evidence, and therefore, the GoJ finds them unacceptable.

In Japan, there have been active campaigns to rescue abductees, including the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea formed in 1997 (pictured above) and the submission of petitions signed by more than 15 million people (as of October 2021) to the Prime Minister of Japan.

The abduction of Japanese citizens is a critical issue concerning the sovereignty of Japan and the lives and safety of Japanese citizens. Without the resolution of this issue, there can be no normalization of relations between Japan and North Korea. The GoJ is fully committed to making its utmost efforts to realize the return of all abductees to Japan as quickly as possible.

### 2. Q&A on the Abductions Issue

#### Q1: Why did North Korea abduct Japanese people?

The full truth behind the abductions remains unclear. However, it is deemed that North Korea committed these abductions, which are unprecedented crimes sponsored by the North Korean government, for the following reasons:

- 1) disguising North Korean agents as Japanese citizens
- 2) forcing abductees to train North Korean agents to act as Japanese
- 3) recruitment by the "Yodo-go" group\*, which is still being harbored in North Korea

\*An inclusive term for the hijackers who hijacked Japan Airlines Flight 351 on March 31, 1970, and their family members. This group is commonly known as the "Yodo-go".

#### Q2: Is North Korea making a false statement in claiming that the abductions issue "has already been resolved"?

North Korea has been claiming that it has already returned all the surviving abductees and that the remaining abductees have either died or never entered its territory, and hence that the abductions issue has already been resolved. North Korea, however, has only provided extremely unnatural and thoroughly unconvincing evidence of the "death" of abductees.

During the Japan-North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations held in May 2014, North Korea agreed to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale probe regarding all the abducted Japanese citizens and resolve the abductions issue and other issues with Japan. The GoJ will continue to do everything in its power to realize the return of all the abductees.

#### Q3: Why are there abductees who cannot come back to Japan although North Korea has admitted their abduction?

It is suspected that North Korea considers it risky that inconvenient facts about the country, such as committing espionage, will be revealed by returning the abductees to Japan. For instance, former North Korean agent Kim Hyon-Hui passed herself off as Japanese and blew up an airplane of the ROK in November 1987. Kim Hyon-Hui gave testimony that she learned Japanese from an abductee (Ms. TAGUCHI Yaeko). In the meantime, North Korea has not admitted to having been involved in this incident and has not returned Ms. Taguchi back to Japan for fear that the truth will be revealed if she returns.

#### Q4: How many Japanese people were abducted by North Korea?

17 are identified by the GoJ as victims of abduction by North Korea. Of those, five have returned to Japan, but 12 abductees still have not returned home.

In addition, it has also been revealed that two young Korean domicile children were abducted from Japan. Moreover there are many other missing Japanese people for whom the possibility of abduction cannot be ruled out\*. The GoJ has been urging North Korea to return all the abductees, regardless of whether they are officially identified as such, back to Japan immediately.

\*The GoJ is continuing information gathering, investigations and inquiries both in Japan and overseas about the missing 873 persons (as of November 2021) for whom the possibility of abduction cannot be ruled out.

#### Q5: When can we say that the abductions issue is resolved?

It is necessary to achieve the following three items for the resolution of the abductions issue:

- 1) The safety of all abductees must be secured, and they must be returned to Japan immediately.
- 2) North Korea must give a full account of the truth regarding all abduction cases.
- 3) North Korea must hand over to Japan the persons who carried out the abductions.

### 3. International Symposium - Towards the Immediate Rescue of All Abductees - YouTube Livestream Event

The abductions issue by North Korea is a matter of grave concern pertaining to the sovereignty of Japan as well as the lives and safety of the Japanese citizens and is a top priority for the Government of Japan (the GoJ). The GoJ continues to put its maximum effort within the government to realize the immediate return of all abductees. The GoJ has also actively engaged in publicity and awareness-raising activities, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the situation surrounding North Korea is substantially changing, close cooperation with the United States and other related countries is essential for the resolution of the abductions issue.

In this context, the GoJ provides an opportunity through hosting a symposium to directly listen to the voices of the families of the victims not only from Japan but also from other countries, as well as to understand the actual state of the abductions issue. Experts on the human rights situation or on North Korea are also invited to discuss the ways for international cooperation towards the resolution of the abductions issue as a global challenge.

#### How to View the Symposium:

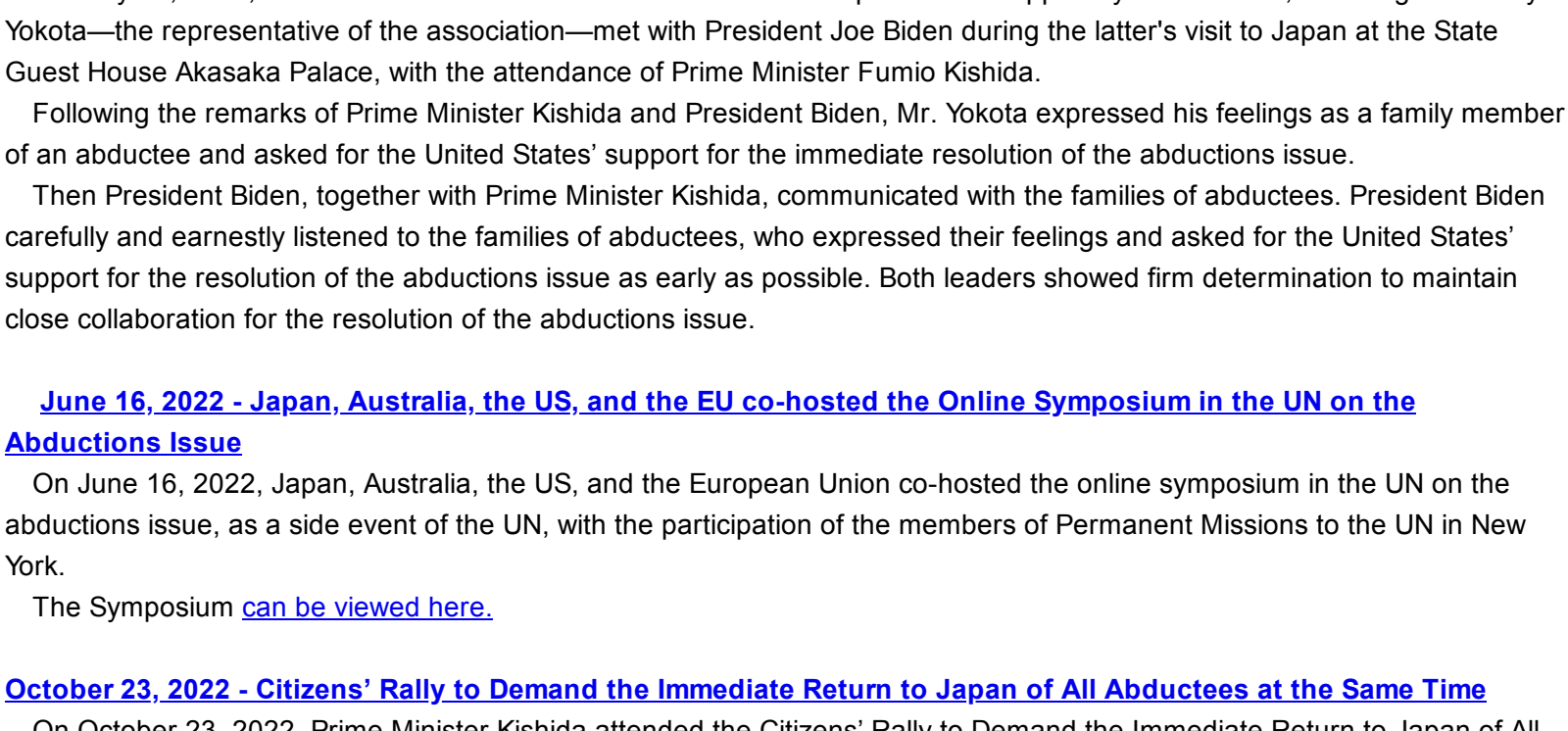
The symposium [will be streamed on YouTube \(English\)](#). We hope that you will be able to view the symposium.

#### Date and Time:

- Pacific Standard Time: **December 9, 9–11pm**
- Japan Time: December 10, 2–4pm

For more information about the event, [please see this event flyer](#).

### 4. Recent News Regarding the Abductions Issue



(Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office)

#### [March 14, 2022 - Meeting with the families of abductees by North Korea and U.S. Ambassador to Japan H.E Mr. Rahm Emanuel](#)

On March 14, Mr. Takuya Yokota, the representative of the Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea; other families of abductees; and Mr. Tsutomu Nishioka, Chairman of the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea; met H.E Mr. Rahm Emanuel, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

The families of the abductees expressed their gratitude to the Ambassador for taking the time to meet them soon after having arrived as Ambassador to Japan. In addition, while not only the abductees but also their families are aging and the time left is limited, they asked for the United States' continuous support and cooperation in order to realize the earliest possible return of all the abductees.

H.E. Ambassador Emanuel listened carefully to the statements of the families of abductees and stated that the United States remains committed to work with Japan to seek an immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

#### [May 23, 2022 - Meeting with the families of abductees by North Korea and U.S. President Joe Biden](#)

On May 23, 2022, 11 members of the Association of Families of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea, including Mr. Takuya Yokota—the representative of the association—met with President Joe Biden during the latter's visit to Japan at the State Guest House Akasaka Palace, with the attendance of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Following the remarks of Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden, Mr. Yokota expressed his feelings as a family member of an abductee and asked for the United States' support for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Then President Biden, together with Prime Minister Kishida, communicated with the families of abductees. President Biden carefully and earnestly listened to the families of abductees, who expressed their feelings and asked for the United States' support for the resolution of the abductions issue as early as possible. Both leaders showed firm determination to maintain close collaboration for the resolution of the abductions issue.

#### [June 16, 2022 - Japan, Australia, the US, and the EU co-hosted the Online Symposium in the UN on the Abductions Issue](#)

On June 16, 2022, Japan, Australia, the US, and the European Union co-hosted the online symposium in the UN on the abductions issue, as a side event of the UN, with the participation of the members of Permanent Missions to the UN in New York.

The Symposium [can be viewed here](#).

#### [October 23, 2022 - Citizens' Rally to Demand the Immediate Return to Japan of All Abductees at the Same Time](#)

On October 23, 2022, Prime Minister Kishida attended the Citizens' Rally to Demand the Immediate Return to Japan of All Abductees at the Same Time held in Tokyo and gave an address.

Excerpts from PM Kishida's address:

"It is truly regrettable that we have not been able to bring back a single abductee since 2002. The abductions issue, one of the highest priority issues for the Kishida Cabinet, is a grave violation of human rights and we cannot be complacent about it for even a moment.

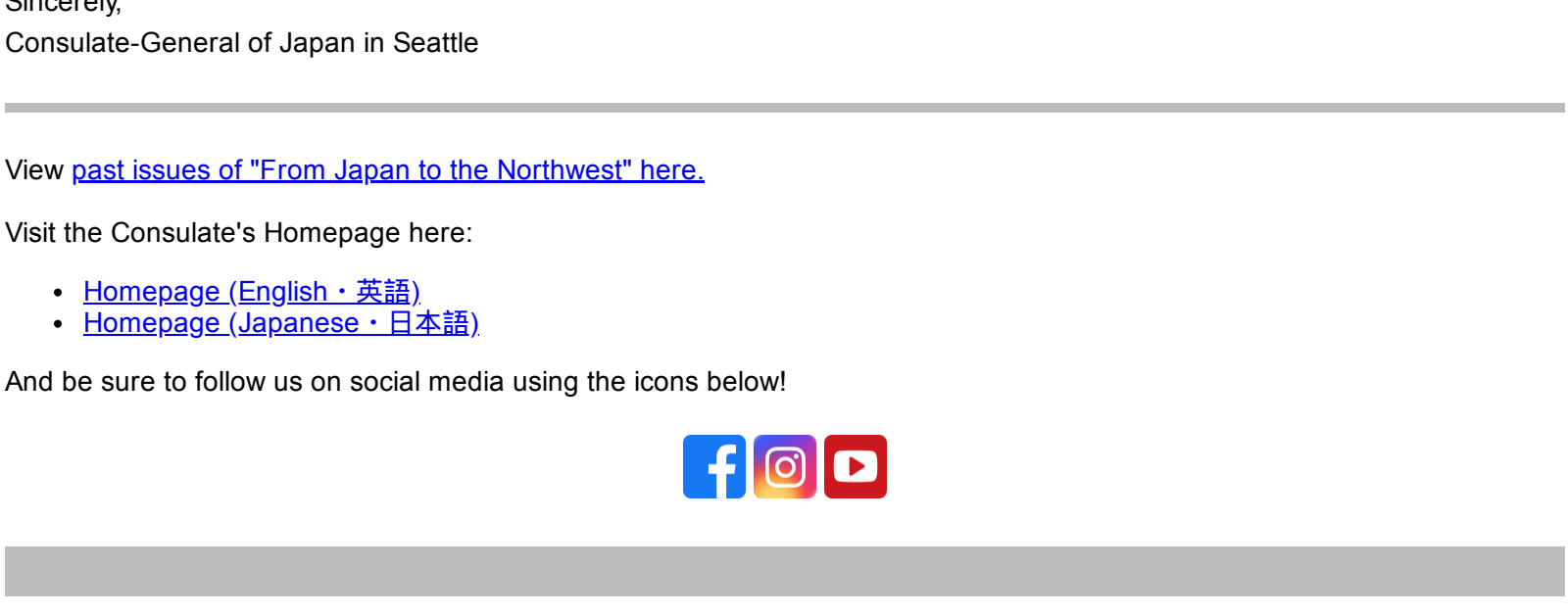
...

With regard to North Korea, the Government of Japan seeks to normalize its relations with North Korea through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear, and missile issues, and settling the unfortunate past...Establishing a constructive relationship between Japan and North Korea will not only serve the interests of both sides but also contribute greatly to regional peace and security. To this end, I believe that it is critical that both Japan and I make proactive efforts and build relations between leaders.

...

Today, a firm, unanimous resolve of the Japanese citizens was expressed in this meeting. This will serve as a strong push toward the settlement of the abductions issue. I believe that it is this voice which will push the international community and then North Korea into action."

### 5. VIDEO: Voices of the International Community Calling for the Resolution of the Abduction (Youtube Link)



The Headquarters for the Abduction Issue has released the video, "[Voices of the International Community Calling for the Resolution of the Abduction Issue](#)", as an initiative to send messages to the international community on the resolution of the abductions issue by North Korea.

### 6. Reference Documents with Further Information

- [Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chronology of Abductions \(PDF\)](#)
- [Kidnapped 13-year-old Girl, Miss YOKOTA Megumi \(PDF\)](#)
- [Animated Dramatization: MEGUMI \(Youtube\)](#)

That's it for this issue of "From Japan to the Northwest."

Until next time, thank you for reading!

Sincerely,  
Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle

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