

Mother of Megumi Yokota, Abducted by North Korea, Marks Daughter's 62nd Birthday

横田めぐみさんが北朝鮮に拉致されてから、半世紀近い年月が流れました。今年62歳の誕生日を迎えためぐみさんに、90歳の母・早紀江さんは今も変わらず帰還を願う思いを寄せています。家族が長年待ち続けている拉致問題を風化させず、解決につなげていくためには何が必要なのでしょう。私たちにできることについて考えてみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Megumi Yokota was abducted by North Korean agents at the age of 13 in 1977. She turned 62 on October 5.

Ahead of her birthday, her mother Sakie, 90, spoke to reporters at her home in Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, on October 1.

"We've worked so hard for so long, yet we still don't know anything, and I can't even hear her voice," Sakie said, expressing her frustration.

Reflecting on how nearly half a century has passed since Megumi was taken, Sakie slumped her shoulders and said, "It's painful to imagine what Megumi might look like now."

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1. Article

In September, Megumi's younger brother, Takuya Yokota, who heads the Association of Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, visited the United States along with Koichiro Iizuka, the eldest son of Yaeko Taguchi. Taguchi, who would now be 71, was 22 when she was abducted.

During their visit, they met with US government officials and others and confirmed their willingness to cooperate in [efforts](#) to bring the abductees home.

Around the same time, at a Japan-US summit, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said she had received "full [support](#)" from President Donald Trump for the immediate resolution of the abduction [issue](#).

Sakie spoke positively about the US visit, where Takuya showed people he met a hand-knitted scarf Megumi had made.

"Megumi came to me and asked me to teach her, so I taught her a simple knitting [technique](#). She said it was interesting, and the scarf just kept getting longer and longer," Sakie recalled.

The scarf was completed shortly before Megumi was abducted by North Korea on November 15, 1977. She wore it only once.

Sakie says she has never forgotten the warmth she felt when she first held Megumi in her arms. She was surprised by how heavy the baby felt.

Even after Megumi was abducted, Sakie used to prepare a birthday cake for her every year. In recent years, however, she has stopped doing so.

"Even if I do something just for the sake of appearances, it feels empty, and I can't bear it," she said.

This year, too, Sakie will quietly pray for her daughter's safe return on her birthday.

Her beloved daughter is now in her 60s. Worried about Megumi's health, Sakie had a message for her: "I believe you will be able to come home. Please stay strong and keep fighting."

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. abduct 誘拐する

Every year, hundreds of children are abducted.

2. effort 努力

Our efforts to stop global warming will succeed if we work together.

3. support 支持

The city's plan to build new apartments has the support of both the local businesses and the average person.

4. issue 問題

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about the issue of job losses from AI.

5. technique 技術

In my English class today, I learned a new technique for remembering new words.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

**1. What did Takuya Yokota show people during his visit to the US?
What is special about it?**

2. What did Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi say at a recent meeting?

**3. Why did Ms. Yokota stop making a cake for her daughter's birthday
each year?**

**4. What do you think the government needs to do to solve the
abduction problem?**

**5. Is there anything that the average Japanese person can do to help
solve this problem?**

4. 「姿を想像するのがつらい」横田めぐみさん62歳 母の早紀江さんが切実な思い

13歳だった昭和52年に北朝鮮に拉致された横田めぐみさん（62）が10月5日の誕生日を迎えるのを前に、母の早紀江さん（90）が1日、自宅のある川崎市内で取材に応じた。「これだけ頑張っても何も分からず、声を聴くこともできない」といらだちを示した上で、離れ離れになってから半世紀近い月日が経過したことも念頭に、「（今のめぐみさんの姿を）想像するのがつらい」と肩を落とした。

めぐみさんの弟で、家族会代表の拓也さん（58）や、田口八重子さん（71）＝拉致当時（22）＝の長男、飯塚耕一郎さん（49）らが9月に訪米。米政府関係者らと面会し、被害者救出に向けた協力の意向を確認した。

同時期に行われた日米首脳会談では、高市早苗首相がトランプ米大統領から拉致問題の即時解決について、「全面的な支持を得ることができた」と明らかにしていた。

早紀江さんはこの日、一連の訪米を前向きに評価。拓也さんが面会者らに示した、めぐみさんが手編みしたマフラーに言及し、「（めぐみさんが）『教えてちょうだい』と言ってきたので簡単な編み方を教えたら、『面白いね』って。それで、どんどん長くなっちゃった」と振り返った。

完成は、昭和52年11月15日にめぐみさんが北朝鮮に拉致される少し前の時期で、実際にめぐみさんが身につけたのは1回きりだったという。

誕生時、「こんなに重いのか」と驚きながらめぐみさんを初めて抱いたときのぬくもりは、忘れたことがない。ただ、以前は誕生日にケーキを用意していたが、このところはやめた。「形だけのことをしても、むなしくて耐えられなくなる」からだ。

今年の誕生日も帰還を静かに祈る。最愛の娘も60歳を過ぎた。健康を案じつつ、「必ず帰ってこられると信じている。倒れないでがんばって」とメッセージを送った。

出典：「姿を想像するのがつらい」横田めぐみさん62歳 母の早紀江さんが切実な思い
[Japan Forward](#)

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(A photo taken by Megumi Yokota's late father, Shigeru, during a family trip to Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1975.)

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