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Japan/North Korea: five Japanese abductees must be allowed freedom of choice

As the Japanese and North Korean governments ended two days of talks in the Malaysian capital - Kuala Lumpur - aimed at normalising relations, Amnesty International called on both governments to put human rights at the top of the agenda of any future discussions and to be open on the issue of forced abductions of Japanese nationals to North Korea.

"The Governments of North Korea and Japan should allow the five surviving Japanese nationals who were forcibly abducted and taken to North Korea in the 1970's and are currently visiting Japan freedom of choice as to where they want to stay," said Amnesty International.

"The North Korean government should also make public all information surrounding the forced abductions and disclose vital details surrounding the deaths of eight other Japanese who were forcibly taken to North Korea in the 1970's and 1980's," urged the Organization.

Background

In a historic summit last month in Pyongyang on September 17 with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il apologised for the forced abductions of 13 Japanese nationals who were taken to North Korea in the late 1970's and early 1980's. North Korea had previously denied being responsible for these disappearances. For years Japanese and North Korean relations have been soured by this issue.

Five of Japanese nationals who were forcibly abducted are alive and are currently visiting Japan. Eight of the abducted are alleged to have died either of natural causes or by committing suicide. North Korea had allegedly used the abductees to train spies in Japanese language and culture.

Amnesty International does not have access to impartial information about the forced abductions and due to restrictions by the North Korean authorities the Organization has not been permitted to conduct independent research inside North Korea.

Public Document

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