ニュージーランド南部地震で安否の分からない名古屋市出身の鈴木陽子さん（３１）の両親、喜久男さん（６４）と千鶴子さん（６３）が５日、現地から 同市守山区の自宅に戻り、初めて報道陣に心境を語った。同国政府は３日に生存者の捜索を打ち切っており、陽子さんの無事を祈る２人は「何もできず非常に残 念」と悲しみをこらえて話した。

Kikuo and Chizuko Suzuki, parents of Suzuki Youko, whose whereabouts are unknown five days after the earthquake that struck southern New Zealand, will return from NZ on the 5th to their home in Moriyamaku, and discuss the situation with the press. The New Zealand government gave up the search for survivors on the 3rd. Kikuo and Chizuko, who continued to pray for their son’s safety, sadly remarked that “there was nothing we could do”.

「わずかな期待を持って現地に行ったが、最悪の結果で帰ることになった」。喜久男さんは疲れた様子で話した。

“We went to New Zealand with only a bit of hope, but this is the worst possible outcome”, said Mr. Kikuo of the depressing situation.

　地震はテレビのニュースで知った。初めは楽観していたが、映像で現地の惨状を見て、「大変なことが起きた」とすぐに外務省に連絡。発生から２４時間経っても安否が確認できないため、取るものも取りあえず現地に向かった。

They found out about the earthquake on the television news. At first they were not worried, but after seeing images of the devastation, realized “something terrible has happened”, and quickly contacted the Foreign Ministry. When Youko’s whereabouts could not be confirmed after 24 hours, they dropped everything and went to New Zealand.

　クライストチャーチに着いてすぐ、倒壊現場に行きたかったが、安全面からなかなか近づかせてもらえなかった。政府のはからいで一度だけ訪れた際 は、倒壊のすさまじさに「ただ涙があふれてきて、声にならなかった」と話す。遺体が収容されている軍の施設も入ることができず、安否がわからないまま「も しかしたらいるかも知れない」と、建物の外から花を手向けた。

When the Suzukis arrived in Christchurch, they immediately wanted to go to the scene of the destruction, but for security reasons they were not allowed to come near the scene. The government arranged for them to visit the scene only once, but faced with the intensity of the destruction, they “could only weep, and had no voice to speak” said Kikuo. Not wishing to enter the temporary facility set up to house the corpses, without confirming their son’s status, thinking that “perhaps he is in here”, they left flowers outside the building.

　２人が陽子さんと最後に会ったのは、陽子さんが同国に出発する直前の昨年１０月。長男を含めた４人で、夕食にお好み焼きを作って楽しんだ。「偉そうに『世界に通用する医療従事者になるんだ』と元気に話していたのに……」と、喜久男さんは寂しげに振り返った。

The last time they saw Youko was October of last year, right before he left for New Zealand. The four person family, including Youko’s older brother, made okonomiyaki for dinner and enjoyed themselves. “He acted confidently and energetically, as if he had become a‘world-travelling health care professional’”said Kikuo with a sad downward glance.

　地震当日は、同国の病院で働く資格を取るため、被災したビルで語学研修を受けていたとみられる。四つある試験の半分に合格し、３月に残りの試験を 受ける予定だった。メールで連絡を取り合っていた千鶴子さんは「試験に受かってよかったね、と喜んでいた。試験が終われば現地で働くと言っていた」とうつ むきながら話した。

It appears that on the day of the earthquake, Youko was in the destroyed building taking a language course to earn a certification necessary to work in a New Zealand hospital. He had already passed two of the four required exams, and was planning to take the remaining exams in March. Chizuko-san, who had been trading emails with him, said sadly that “He said he was delighted that he passed the exam, and that when the exams were done he could work in New Zealand”.

　陽子さんの安否を心配する日は今後も続く。喜久男さんは「何もできず非常に残念。あとは現地の警察、政府からの連絡をただ待つことしかできない」と肩を落とした。（黒田悠水）

They will continue to worry about Youko’s safety. “We were powerless to help our son,” said Kikuo, his shoulders slumped. “Now all we can do is wait for news from the New Zealand government or police.”