

Preface

Natural disasters devour victims indiscriminately. But the level of suffering and the speed of their recovery vary depending on their age, gender, ethnicity and class.

A series of recent calamities around the world have proved that disaster preparedness has not prepared governments enough to provide equal care or treatment.

Life in shelters drags on -- for years, in some cases.

In the chaotic aftermath, victims feel stress and take it out on the disadvantaged. While violence against women increases, chances of adults abusing their children become higher. Elderly citizens and the physically disabled are left behind, not getting special attention from governments.

Many of these people's plights go unnoticed. It may be because the government or law enforcement try to silence the victims. Or the victims of further crimes might be convinced that it is their selfishness and feel guilty for filing complaints. It may be that the media want to cover up the misery and mask it with respectful volunteer activism.

But the minorities are often victimized more than once.

We have picked up the faintest voices among the victims and compiled them so that not only the authorities but citizens themselves can also better prepare for and avoid repeating the same mistakes.

We feel that the samples we present here are selective but should be considered valuable. What we must learn from these stories, reports and research of natural disasters is that we must practice equality in normal circumstances. Then and only then, can we fair to every victim.

Even though records show that crimes increased and bias was seen in rescue assistance in times of previous disasters, very little improvement has been made around the world.

We felt the urge and the need to publish the voices of women victims in the Great Hanshin Earthquake in English even after 12 years have passed.

We hope that this will be useful in developing the fair disaster preparedness in the future.