

# 以牙還牙

*yi3 ya2 hai2 ya2*

Activists were arrested when they tried to take soil from a site in Tin Shui Wai where they said illegal dumping had taken place.

They said they planned to leave bags of soil at the entrance to government headquarters to protest against inaction in respect of illegal dumping.

There was so much soil at the site that it was practically a hill. The activists said it was both unsightly and dangerous.

Lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan went to support the protesters, and was forcibly removed by police officers when he yelled at them.

The protest was carried out under the slogan “以泥還泥” (*yi3 ni2 hai2 ni2*) - literally “soil for soil,” which is clearly a word play with the idiom “以牙還牙” (*yi3 ya2 hai2 ya2*) - a tooth for a tooth, or “以眼還眼” (*yi3 yan3 hai2 yan3*) - an eye for an eye.

## Idiom by Lon Yan

“以” (*yi3*) is “with,” “to use as,” “牙” (*ya2*) “a tooth,” and “還” (*hai2*) is “to pay back,” “to give or do something in return.” Literally, “以牙還牙” (*yi3 ya2 hai2 ya2*) is “to repay tooth with tooth.”

It is the equivalent of the English expression “a tooth for a tooth,” meaning “retaliation,” “to exact revenge,” “tit for tat.” The idea is to make a person suffer in exactly the same way as he or she has made others suffer.

If you want to talk a friend out of his or her revenge plan, you can say “以牙還牙” (*yi3 ya2 hai2 ya2*) is never a wise move.”

### Terms containing the character “牙” (*ya2*) include:

牙齒 (*ya2 chi3*) - a tooth

牙醫 (*ya2 yi1*) - a dentist

牙刷 (*ya2 shua1*) - a toothbrush

牙膏 (*ya2 gao1*) - toothpaste