

趕盡殺絕

gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2

Some Chinese fishermen have been accused of using an “extermination” approach to fishing, netting even baby fish and microorganisms, turning the ocean floor barren. Such fishing methods may be described as “趕盡殺絕” (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2*).

“趕” (*gan3*) is “to expel,” “盡” (*jin4*) “to the utmost,” “all,” “entirely,” “殺” (*sha1*) “to kill,” “to slaughter,” and “絕” (*jue2*) “to make extinct.” Literally, “趕盡殺絕” (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2*) is “expel all, kill to extinction.”

It means “to spare none,” “to kill to the last one,” “to exterminate.” It also means “to be ruthless,” “to show no mercy.”

“趕盡殺絕” (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2*) is cruel and vicious, and is considered reprehensible, unless if what you dealing with are vermin and pests.

If a company fires an employee and, out of spite, writes poison-pen letters to all the em-

Idiom by Lon Yan

ployee’s potential employers, it is practicing “趕盡殺絕” (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2*) on the employee.

A related idiom is “竭澤而漁” (*jie2 ze2 er2 yu2*), which means, literally, “to drain the pond to get all the fish,” “to fish by emptying the water of a pond.”

If you drain the pond, you may walk around the bottom and pick up all the fish, including small ones. But the habitat will be ruined, and the pond will not produce fish next year.

So the idiom means, figuratively, to act in a short-sighted manner, like killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

Terms containing the character “盡” (*jin4*) include:

盡力 (*jin4 li4*) – to spare no effort

盡快 (*jin4 kuai4*) – as soon as possible; as quickly as possible

盡量 (*jin4 liang4*) – as much as possible

盡責 (*jin4 ze2*) – to do one’s duty