

# 喪盡天良

*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*

Mainland police continue to round up members of the “black-hearted” ring that has been selling expired or improperly stored vaccines threatening to cause disability and death throughout the country.

The case is similar to the milk powder scandal in 2008 in which baby formula containing the toxic chemical melamine led to the death of at least six children and sickened hundreds of thousand of others.

Those who sold toxic milk powder and bad vaccines can be described as “喪盡天良” (*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*). “喪” (*sang1*) is “to lose,” “盡” (*jin4*) “to use up,” “to exhaust,” “entirely,” “totally,” and “天良” (*tian1 liang2*) is “conscience.” Literally, “喪盡天良” (*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*) is “losing all conscience.” It means “devoid of conscience,” “utterly heartless.”

We do not call all lawbreakers “喪盡天良” (*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*). People commit crimes for dif-

## Idiom by Lon Yan

ferent reasons and there are different kinds of crimes.

For example, the idiom cannot be used to describe a hungry street sleeper who steals a bun from a shop. Even a burglar who steals a million dollars from a bank vault cannot “qualify” as “喪盡天良” (*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*).

“喪盡天良” (*sang1 jin4 tian1 liang2*) is reserved for the worst kind of criminals and the most atrocious kinds of acts, such as the perpetrators of the milk powder and vaccine scandals as they are prepared to put the lives and health of hundreds of thousands or even millions of children in danger for money.

**Terms containing the character “喪” (*sang1*) include:**

喪失 (*sang1 shi1*) – to lose

喪生 (*sang1 sheng1*) – to lose one’s life

喪禮 (*sang1 li3*) – a funeral

喪氣 (*sang1 qi4*) – disheartened