

見死不救

jian4 si3 bu2 jiu4

A taxi driver suffering from leukemia (白血病人、血癌) died after public hospitals failed to give him timely treatment. A coroner's inquest (死因聆訊) found the patient died of natural causes (死於自然) after "a series of unfortunate incidents." An expert witness said the death could have been avoided. The widow said the hospitals had "見死不救" (*jian4 si3 bu2 jiu4*).

"見" (*jian4*) is "to see," "死" (*si3*) is "to die," "death," "不" (*bu2*) is "not," and "救" (*jiu4*) is "to rescue," "to relieve." Literally, "見死不救" (*jian4 si3 bu2 jiu4*) is "see death not rescue." It means "to see someone in mortal danger without lifting a finger to save him," "to do nothing to save someone from ruin."

"死" (*si3*) in the idiom does not mean that death has already occurred. There is nothing you can do for a dead person. It means

Idiom by Lon Yan

someone is in mortal danger. If no help comes, he or she will die.

The idiom does not only apply to a situation that actually involves mortal danger. It can also be used for any situation in which someone is in dire (急迫的) circumstances.

If your friend needs money to make a mortgage payment or lose their home and you refuse to help, that could be called "見死不救" (*jian4 si3 bu2 jiu4*), or at least that is what they would think.

People pleading for help would often say "Are you really 見死不救 (*jian4 si3 bu2 jiu4*)?" - Are you really going to let me die?

Terms containing the character "救" (*jiu4*) include:

救火 (*jiu4 huo3*) - fighting a fire

救護車 (*jiu4 hu4 che1*) - an ambulance

救命 (*jiu4 ming4*) - to save somebody's life

救生員 (*jiu4 sheng1 yuan2*) - a lifeguard