

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 斬草除根

*zhan3 cao3 chu2 gen1*

Kim Jung-nam (金正男), the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jung-un (金正恩), has died finally, apparently in the hands of assassins after reportedly being hunted for years.

He was sprayed on the face by what was believed to be a very powerful toxin and/or jabbed by poison syringe as he was waiting to board a plane at the Kuala Lumpur International airport.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service said the assassination was carried out under a "standing order" from Kim Jung-un and that Kim Jong-nam, already on de facto exile, wasn't a real threat to his brother, but was hunted down nonetheless because the North Korean leader is paranoia. If these allegation were true, the assassination is typical "斬草除根" (*zhan3 cao3 chu2 gen1*).

"斬" (*zhan3*) is "to chop," "to cut off," "to kill," "草" (*cao3*) "grass," "weed," "除" (*chu2*) "to rid of" and "根" (*gen1*) "the roots." "斬草除根" (*zhan3 cao3 chu2 gen1*), literally, is "cut weeds get rid of roots," "eliminate the roots when you are cutting weeds."

The idiom means "root out," "to exterminate," "to eradicate something completely," "to eliminate completely."

The art of "斬草除根" (*zhan3 cao3 chu2 gen1*) had been perfected by rulers in ancient China who often "誅九族" (*zhu1 jiu3 zu2*) - killing everyone in the offending person's clan.

To "斬草除根" (*zhan3 cao3 chu2 gen1*) is to be thorough in eliminating a problem. But it carries a sinister connotation of being ruthless.

### Terms containing the character "根" (*gen1*) include:

根據 (*gen1 ju4*) – to base on; according to; in light of

根本 (*gen1 ben3*) – fundamental; basic

根治 (*gen1 zhi4*) – to cure completely

根源 (*gen1 yuan2*) – source; origin