

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 人多勢衆

**ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4**

The Court of Appeal imposed immediate jail sentences on three student activists for their roles in the unlawful mass assembly outside the government headquarters three years ago.

The three had led over 100 protesters who stormed the forecourt of the east wing of the government headquarters in Admiralty, dubbed the Civic Square.

The judgement, written in Chinese, used many Chinese idioms. One of which is “人多勢衆” (*ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4*). It said the three had hoped to rely on “人多勢衆” (*ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4*) to “retake the Civic Square.”

“人” (*ren2*) is “a person,” “people,” “多” (*duo1*) “many,” “much,” “plenty,” “勢” (*shi4*) “power,” “strength,” “influence,” “momentum,” and “衆” (*zhong4*) “numerous,” “a crowd.” Literally, “人多勢衆” (*ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4*) is “many men, a great force,” “many people provides great strength.”

The idiom means “to overwhelm with numerical strength,” “there’s safety in numbers.”

It is debatable whether strength always lies in numbers. But the force of a large number of people joining in a common action can be great, or even dangerous and intimidating.

A single employee fighting for a pay rise probably won’t get very far, as he or she is “勢孤力弱” (*shi4 gu1 li4 ruo4*) – “not have enough manpower and weak.”

But a strike in which all workers take part is not something the management can ignore, and that is because of “人多勢衆” (*ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4*).

Half a million people marching on the streets is certainly “人多勢衆” (*ren2 duo1 shi4 zhong4*), and it could force a chief executive of the SAR to step down!

### Terms containing the character “衆” (*zhong4*) include:

眾多 (*zhong4 duo1*) – numerous

眾生 (*zhong4 sheng1*) – all living things

公眾 (*gong1 zhong4*) – the public

眾議院 (*zhong4 yi4 yuan4*) – the Lower House