

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 無一倖免

wu2 yi2 xing4 mian3

Leisure and Cultural Services Department workers pruned tree in Tai Po in June, and inadvertently destroyed the nests of egrets and herons.

At the time, a total of 15 hatchlings were picked up and sent to the Wild Animal Rescue Centre of Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden. Five were dead on arrival and one was euthanized due to its serious condition, nine critically injured were put under intensive care.

The blunder triggered a public outrage, with more than 1,000 people signing an online petition demanding a thorough investigation and for those responsible be disciplined and prosecuted.

People should even be angrier now because a department official brought to a recent district council meeting the grim news that all of the young birds have since died.

The idiom to describe the fate of the birds is “無一倖免” (wu2 yi2 xing4 mian3).

“無” (wu2) is “without,” “nil,” “not to have,” “—” (yi2) “one,” “倖免” (xing4 mian3) “to have a narrow escape,” “to escape a bad fortune by sheer luck.” Literally, “無一倖免” (wu2 yi2 xing4 mian3) is “not one manages a narrow escape.” The idiom means “none was spared,” “leaving no survivors.”

“無一倖免” (wu2 yi2 xing4 mian3) is used when there are no survivors in a disaster, like when a passenger plane fell off the sky, killing everyone on board. The idiom is not applicable to catastrophes in which there are survivors.

In those cases, we use the idiom “倖免於難” (xing4 mian3 yu2 nan2), meaning “having a close shave,” “having a narrow escape” to describe those who live.

### Terms containing the character “免” (mian3) include:

免費 (mian3 fei4) – free of charge; for free

免稅 (mian3 shui4) – tax-free; duty-free; tax-exempt

免疫 (mian3 yi4) – immunity

免役 (mian3 yi4) – to exempt from service