European countries are facing a refugee crisis. Their borders are being breached every day by tens of thousands of people fleeing war-torn countries.

The picture of the body of a young refugee boy found washed up on a beach gave a “face” to the influx figures reported on news pages every day, and the world was shocked.

*The Standard*’s Mary Ma commentary observed that European countries are opening their hearts, but cautioned that “the heart, however compassionate (有同情心) it wants to be – can’t solve all the problems.”

That is true. No country, however willing, can take in an unlimited number of immigrants. At some point, they must say “愛莫能助” (ai4 mo4 neng2 zhu4).

“愛” (ai4) is “love,” “affection,” “莫” (mo4) is “none,” “don’t,” “能” (neng2) means “can,” “be capable of,” and “助” (zhu4) is “to help,” “to aid.” Literally, “愛莫能助” (ai4 mo4 neng2 zhu4) is “love none can help,” “love but can’t help.”

It means “would be glad to help but cannot.” When you say to someone “愛莫能助” (ai4 mo4 neng2 zhu4), you are really saying that “I am concerned about you and sympathize with your plight, but I do not have the capability to help.”

“愛莫能助” (ai4 mo4 neng2 zhu4) is used when someone asks for your help but you are unable to give it. It is a way of turning down someone’s request without hurting their feelings.

**Terms containing the character “助” (zhu4) include:**

- **協助 (xie2 zhu4)** - assistance, to assist
- **助人 (zhu4 ren2)** - to help others
- **互助 (hu4 zhu4)** - to help each other, mutual help
- **贊助 (zan4 zhu4)** - to sponsor, to support (plan, program)