The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about Middle East

殺
Pronunciation: sha (Putonghua, 1st tone), saat (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: taking life, kill


War between 以色列 (yi se lie = “Israel”-transliterated) and 巴勒斯坦人 (ba le si tan ren = “Palestine”-transliterated-people = Palestinians) 殺死 (sha si = kill-dead) thousands. 自殺式襲擊 (zi sha shi xi ji = self-kill-style-ambush-attack) = suicide attacks. 濫殺 (lan sha = overflow-kill) means unnecessarily/unjustifiably killing large numbers.

“冤冤相報” (yuan yuan xiang bao = misdeed/wrong-misdeed/wrong-mutual-repay) means “An eye for an eye”. “殺人者死!” (sha ren zhe si = kill-person-doer-die) means “Killer must die!”

by Diana Yue