

## **Over 300 minority Shiite Muslims buried in mass grave in Nigeria**

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**Lagos (Nigeria):** Nigeria's Kaduna state government has said it secretly buried hundreds of minority Shiite Muslims in a mass grave, after the victims were killed in army raids that underline ongoing impunity despite President Muhammadu Buhari's promises to end military abuses.

Amnesty International is calling for an investigation following what it called "horrific revelations of the slaughter and secret burial."

Kaduna state government secretary Balarabe Lawal told a commission of inquiry on Monday that dozens of soldiers and state officials transported 347 bodies from a mortuary and an army base to a bush site where they were buried after the Dec. 12-14 military raids on Shiite compounds in northern Zaria town. The Shiites say those killed number closer to 1,000.

The military said it ordered the mid-December raids after Shiites attempted to assassinate Nigeria's army chief "charges the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria denies.

The killing only stopped when the military captured and then shot several times Shiite leader Ibraheem Zakzaky, leaving him near-blind, human rights lawyer Femi Falana said this week after finally being allowed to see his client.

Nearly 1,000 Shiites are missing, including scores held in illegal detention along with Zakzaky, said Shiite spokesman Ibrahim Musa. None has been brought to court though the law requires that those arrested be charged within 48 hours. Some wounded Shiites have died in detention for lack of medical care, according to Musa, who is in hiding, saying he is fearful he will be killed if caught.

"The horrific revelation by the Kaduna state government that hundreds of Shiites were gunned down and dumped in mass graves is an important first step to bringing all those suspected of criminal responsibility for this atrocity to trial," the Nigeria director of London-based Amnesty International, M.K. Ibrahim, said in a statement on Tuesday.

Iran, considered the international protector of Shiites, has protested the killings and demanded compensation for victims and for bulldozed properties including Zakzaky's home and a school.

"Kill Boko Haram! Stop killing Shia!" says graffiti on a hospital wall in northern Kano city, referring to the northeastern Islamic extremist insurgency that has killed some 20,000 people. Amnesty has charged that the military are responsible for about 8,000 of the deaths, all detainees killed extra-judicially or through torture, starvation and asphyxiation in overcrowded cells.

- AP