
30 April 2026

Nigeria: Authorities must investigate deaths of at least 150 Fulani people in military camp

The Nigerian authorities must conduct a prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigation into the reported deaths of least 150 members of the Fulani community, most of them children, who have been arbitrarily detained by the Nigerian military in the north-central state of Kwara, Amnesty International said today.

An investigation by the human rights organization found that the victims were among 1,500 Fulani pastoralists who have been detained at the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Orientation Camp in Yikpata for the past three months. They were transported to the camp after being forced to leave their homes amid escalating attacks by armed groups in Kwara. Instead of finding safety, they face overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, restrictions on their movements, acute malnutrition and disease. At least 100 pregnant women at the camp are at risk of life-threatening complications due to a lack of adequate maternal care.

“Members of the Fulani community face persecution on two fronts – from armed groups and the military. Instead of receiving protection, they are being denied their rights to personal liberty, livelihood, movement, education and healthcare. We met people who described losing parents, siblings, spouses, children and grandchildren at the camp. Such tragedies only add to their suffering,” said Isa Sanusi, Director of Amnesty International Nigeria.

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“Nigerian authorities must promptly and effectively investigate the reported deaths and bring to justice those suspected to be responsible. Authorities must ensure access to justice and effective remedies for the victims and their families.

Between 5-11 April 2026, Amnesty International researchers visited the camp and other locations in Kwara State, engaged 60 people in affected and interviewed 30 family members, detainees and survivors of the camp.

Images obtained from the camp show children with prominent and visible ribs, protruding shoulder blades and too weak to walk.

Persecuted on two fronts

Those detained at the NYSC Orientation Camp were displaced persons who had fled widespread attacks and violence by armed groups across villages in the Asa, Edu, Ifelodun and Patigilocal government areas of Kwara State. Many of them had also escaped insecurity linked to recent **military operations** targeting these same armed groups.

Some of the victims interviewed by Amnesty International said they had abandoned their homes and animal herds in January 2026 after military authorities ordered residents who were 'innocent' to leave their villages to make way for military clearance operations, prompting hundreds to gather at a designated meeting point. From there, they were transported by the military to the camp in Yikpata, where they have been held in prolonged detention.

A woman currently detained at the camp said:

"After we fled our villages because of attacks by gunmen, we were called by the government to move to a safe place. So, we gathered at Offa. From there, the Nigerian army conveyed us in their vehicles to Yikpata NYSC camp, where our suffering began. At the camp, we did not have enough food, sometimes only beans in the evening, and even that was not guaranteed. Starvation claimed the lives of many children and pregnant women. My twin daughters, Hauwa'u and Hajja, died there. I remember that at the peak of the deaths, we contributed 60,000 naira (US\$44) to buy white shrouds for burial because of the increasing number of deaths. We buried three corpses in a single grave."

A 43-year-old man who escaped the camp told Amnesty International:

"I escaped from the camp because of the difficult living conditions. A total of 154 people have died from hunger and disease since we were brought and detained there. On the day I escaped, six children died."

Some of those interviewed by Amnesty International described being singled out on commuter buses based on their identity, unlawfully searched, falsely accused of crimes, and forced to pay bribes to regain their freedom or property. "Detaining people based on their identity constitutes discriminatory profiling, and exposes people to violence and other human rights violations," Isa Sanusi said.

"The Nigerian authorities must end the ongoing arbitrary detention of Fulani pastoralists in Kwara state. It is unlawful for a security operation to target individuals, whole families and whole villages based on their ethnicity. The existence of the camp puts detainees outside the protection of the law in flagrant violation of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended] and the country's international human rights obligations."

Background

Following violent attacks by armed groups and bandits in Kwara State, the Nigerian military launched a security operation in January 2026, resulting in the rounding up and detention of members of the Fulani community. Nigeria is facing a mounting death toll from a deadly security and abduction crisis: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/nigeria-mounting-death-toll-unchecked-attacks-armed-groups/>