Figuratively, the idiom means heavy casualties, and not necessarily of the fatal kind.

When a company downsizes and fires half of its 1,000-member workforce, we can say the sackings have resulted in “屍橫遍野” (shi1 heng2 bian4 ye3).

Those who have lost their jobs are the “屍” (shi1) - corpses - in the sense that they have become the casualties of the company’s action, even though they did not actually die.

When we use the idiom, there must be a lot of victims. When a company only fires three people, we cannot call it “屍橫遍野.”

**Terms containing the character “屍” (shi1) include:**

屍體 (shi1 ti3) – corpse, dead body
驗屍 (yan4 shi1) – perform autopsy
毀屍滅跡 (hui3 shi1 mie4 ji4) – chop up corpse and obliterate traces
僵屍 (jiang1 shi1) – a vampire