

## 'Disturbed Areas' reduced under AFSPA [UPSC Current Affairs]

According to a March 2023 announcement by Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, the Indian government has opted to decrease the areas marked as disturbed under the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\)](#) in Nagaland, Assam, and Manipur. This move was made due to notable progress in the security conditions in the North-Eastern region of the country.

In this context, read this article to understand what the 'disturbed areas' tag means under the AFSPA, why the government decided to reduce these areas in the NE region and other details. This topic is relevant for the internal security section of the [UPSC syllabus](#).

### Centre to reduce 'disturbed areas' tag under AFSPA

- As of April 1, a decision has been made to lift the Disturbed Areas notification from an additional district in **Assam**, four police stations in Manipur, and three police stations in Nagaland.
- This means that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) will now only be applicable to eight districts in Assam.
- With this latest decision, a total of 19 police stations in seven districts of **Manipur** have been removed from the disturbed area notification under AFSPA.
- Similarly, in **Nagaland**, 19 police stations in seven districts have been removed from the notification since last year (2022).

### Reasons for decreasing the area under AFSPA:

- The Home Ministry has reported a significant decline in extremist incidents in 2022, with a 76 percent reduction compared to 2014. The number of security personnel fatalities has also decreased by 90 percent, and civilian deaths have decreased by 97 percent during this time.
- In the past four years, multiple peace accords have been implemented in the North-Eastern states, leading to a significant reduction in extremist activities. Many of the previously militant groups have relinquished their weapons and have become active participants in the promotion of peace and development in the region.
  - An estimated seven thousand insurgents have surrendered between 2014 and the present day.
  - Additionally, the Home Ministry has played a crucial role in resolving long-standing issues by signing historic agreements, such as the Bodo Accord in January 2020 and the [Karbi-Anglong Agreement](#) in September 2021.
- Improved communication, development initiatives, and a greater focus on addressing the needs of local communities have also contributed to the reduction in violence.

### Impact of the decision:

- Improved relationship between the local communities and security forces, as AFSPA is often viewed as a symbol of oppression and human rights violations.
- Decreased incidents of violence as the imposition of AFSPA has been known to lead to a cycle of violence and counter-violence, resulting in an increase in human rights violations and mistrust between the communities and the security forces.
- Increased trust in the government and its ability to address security concerns without excessively relying on the use of force.
- Improved development prospects, as the removal of AFSPA from an area could attract more investment and development, leading to better economic opportunities for the local population.
- Better access to justice, as the AFSPA, often provides impunity to security forces in cases of human rights violations, and the removal of the act from an area could allow for a more transparent and accountable judicial process.

### Way forward

- **Periodic Review:** The government should conduct periodic reviews of the situation in the region and evaluate the need for continuing with AFSPA. The review should be based on objective assessments of the security situation and must involve input from local communities, civil society, and independent human rights organizations.
- **Community Engagement:** The government should engage with the local communities in the areas where AFSPA is in place, to address their concerns and ensure that their rights are protected. This could include establishing grievance redressal mechanisms and increasing the participation of local communities in the decision-making process.
- **Training for Security Forces:** The security forces operating in the region should receive specialized training on human rights, conflict resolution, and community policing. This would help to ensure that they operate within the framework of the law and respect the rights of local communities.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** The government should establish effective accountability mechanisms to ensure that security forces are held responsible for any violations of human rights or misuse of power.
- **Development Interventions:** The government should focus on improving the socio-economic conditions in the region by investing in infrastructure, education, health, and employment opportunities. This would help to address the root causes of conflict and reduce the need for the imposition of AFSPA.
- **Gradual Removal:** The government should consider gradually removing AFSPA from areas where the security situation has improved and there is no longer a need for its imposition. This should be done in a transparent and accountable manner, based on objective assessments of the situation on the ground.