

KONYAK GROUPS IN NAGALAND SLAM EXTENSION OF AFSPA

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A poster with photographs of 14 Konyak Nagas who were killed in Oting in Mon district of Nagaland in December. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Konyak Naga organisations have termed the extension of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Nagaland less than a month after the Mon massacre as “adding salt to wound”.

Soldiers of an elite Army unit on December 4 gunned down 13 civilians in Mon district’s Oting village during a botched operation purportedly against extremists. The district is dominated by the Konyaks, one of the largest Naga tribes.

The Ministry of Home Affairs had issued a notification extending the contentious AFSPA for six months from December 30, 2021, by saying the whole of Nagaland was in a “disturbed and dangerous condition” requiring the use of armed forces in the aid of civilians.

“The extension of AFSPA in Nagaland is a total violation of human rights. Adding salt to the wound [of the Nagas], the extension is a calculated sign that undermines human dignity and value while the Konyaks are crying for justice,” the Konyak Union, the apex body of the community, said in a statement. Other organisations such as the Konyak Nyupuh Sheko Khong and Konyak Students’ Union slammed the tagging of the State as “disturbed” when its people have totally denounced any form of violence and were yearning for peace.

The political parties and other social organisations in Nagaland also criticised the extension of the AFSPA and said they were “aghast” by the Centre’s decision when the scars of the Mon incident were still fresh. The Konyak Union had earlier said it was hurt to see some of the soldiers involved in the December 4 incident accompanying an Army team that visited the site of the ambush on December 29 for a probe.

“The public at ground zero has recognised the faces of some of the soldiers who were directly involved in the December 4 incident. The act of bringing along the killers of the incident seems like an intention to hurt those already in grief,” the union said in a statement.

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