



## Suspension of Amnesty International Operations in India

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### Why in News

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**Amnesty International India** has halted its **human rights operations** in India due to the freezing of its bank accounts by the Government of India.

The government has also set up a **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** inquiry against Amnesty.

### Key Points

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- **Argument by Amnesty:** It has alleged that the government has frozen its bank accounts due to repeated **calls for transparency and against the human rights violations** in the country.
  - The **European Union (EU)** has also **expressed its concerns against the action of the government** citing the valued work of Amnesty International worldwide.
  - Recently, **Amnesty International (AI)** India had demanded **an independent investigation** into all allegations of human rights violations by the police during the **north-east Delhi riots** and the establishment of the **National Commission for Human Rights** in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Argument by the Government:** The government has accused Amnesty of defying the law of the land.
  - India doesn't allow interference in domestic political debates by entities funded by foreign donations. This law applies equally to all and it shall apply to Amnesty International as well.
  - In order to circumvent the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010** (FCRA) regulations, **Amnesty UK** remitted large amounts of money to four entities registered in India, by classifying it as **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI).
  - A significant amount of foreign money was also remitted to **Amnesty (India)** without approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs under FCRA. This rerouting of money was **in contravention of extant legal provisions**.

- **Background:** In the past five years, the government has taken action against several foreign donors including **Compassion International, World Movement for Democracy (WMD), Greenpeace**, etc on grounds of FCRA violations.
- **New Rules for NGOs under FCRA amendment, 2020:**
  - The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020** was passed by the Parliament amending Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.
  - In order to receive foreign funds, an NGO has to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is assigned a unique **FCRA registration number**, to be renewed every five years.
  - Every FCRA-registered NGO will have to **open an FCRA-marked bank account** with a designated branch of State Bank of India in New Delhi.
  - The **cap on administrative expenses has been lowered** from 50% of foreign funds received to 20%.
  - It **prohibits** the transfer of foreign grants received by an entity to a partner organisation or an associated person, which is a usual practice.
  - **Criticism:** This has been criticized as an act to suppress the NGOs that dissent against the government.
    - The amendment will **impact many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** working in India.
  - **Advantage:** This has strengthened the compliance mechanism, **enhancing transparency and accountability**, and will help in curbing fraud and threats of the sovereignty of the country in the name of NGOs.

### **Amnesty International**

- It is an **international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)** founded in London (UK) in 1961.
- It seeks to **publicize violations by governments** and other entities **of rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**, especially freedom of speech and of conscience and the right against torture.
- In 1977, it was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Peace**.
- **AI India** is a part of the global human rights movement spearheaded by Amnesty International. It has its **registered office in Bangalore** (Karnataka).

**Source: TH**