# Committee on Extra-judicial Killings in Assam

## Why in news?

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The Gauhati High Court has recently quashed the appointment of a committee that had probed the alleged extra-judicial killings in Assam.

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## What is the case about?

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- It relates to the extra-judicial killings in Assam during 1998-2001, often described as “secret killings”.
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- Close relatives of a number of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) members were shot by unidentified killers.
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- A committee headed by Justice K N Saikia was formed in 2005 to look into this.
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## What were the Saikia panel findings?

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- The committee submitted its report in 2006-07.
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- It blamed the Home Department and sections of the government machinery of being involved in the killings.
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- The report alleged a nexus between police and certain surrendered ULFA members.
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- It coined the term “ulfocide”, and defined it as a general plan for killing of ULFAs, their families and relatives.
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- It claimed that these were caused after ULFA families failed to persuade their ULFA relatives to come for peace talks.
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- It noted that the similarities in the killings indicate the remote planning from higher authorities.
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- Also, the weapons used were of a type generally used by police or the military.
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- Besides, there was police patrolling on the spot prior to and after the killings, but not during the time of the killings.
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## Why was the committee quashed?

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- Four successive panels probed the killings and the Justice Saikia headed committee was the last.
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- Notably, the earlier J N Sarma Commission probed six killings and submitted an interim report on three.
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- The Saikia committee was thus challenged on the ground that the previous panel was still active.
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- As, under Sec 7 of Commissions of Inquiry Act, a gazette notification for discontinuation of an inquiry commission is mandatory.
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- But no such notification was issued for the Sarma Commission.
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- The court has now held that the Saikia panel was legally invalid.
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## What are the other concerns?

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- The Saikia Commission’s report was said to be self-contradictory in parts.
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- This is because at one point it says that “there is no evidence to pinpoint responsibility”.

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- But at another, it blames the then Home department of remotely orchestrating the killings.
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- The investigation was also alleged to be politically motivated.
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**Source: Indian Express**

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