

Special Study of Arakan Affairs

Rakhine Political Parties Amid Myanmar's Political Crisis

No. (2), 2026

Politics Sector



*AFP leader Dr. Aye Maung and candidates seen in front of an election campaign billboard.
(Photo Credit to DVB Burmese)*

March 20 , 2026

1. Introduction

(a) Main Topic	Challenges faced by Rakhine political parties in the aftermath of the coup
(b) Geographical Area	All 17 townships in Rakhine State
(c) Time Period	From February 2021 to December 2025
Since the Myanmar military's illegal coup on February 1, 2021, the State Administration Council (SAC) has frequently asserted that it will hold new elections and transfer state power to the winning political party. However, there is profound scepticism regarding the junta's political guarantees. The refusal to allow the winning party of the 2020 general election to form a government, coupled with the violent crackdown on post-coup protesters, has significantly bolstered the momentum of the armed resistance movement. Meanwhile, in Arakan (Rakhine State), where a temporary ceasefire was initially reached with the Arakan Army (AA) following the coup, the public has increasingly shifted its allegiance away from traditional political parties and electoral processes to the leadership of the United League of Arakan (ULA), the AA's political wing. Since November 2023, the resurgence of intense conflict and urban warfare to control townships between the junta and the AA has further constricted the "political space" available to political parties. Under rising domestic and international pressure, the military junta (SAC) and its Union Election Commission have sought a strategic exit through military, political, and diplomatic manoeuvres. This included attempting to hold a 2025–2026 general election within their controlled territories by the systematic suppression of opposition. Among the Rakhine-based political parties, some opted to contest the polls, while others were banned, dissolved, or rejected under various pretexts. This study offers a primary analysis of the state of Rakhine political parties amid Myanmar's five-year political crisis. Our findings are based on regional media reports, official statements from political parties, statements from the SAC and its election commission, and independent research conducted by the Center for Arakan Studies.	

2. Brief Descriptions

October 2022

(a) UEC Summons and Warns Arakan National Party (ANP) Over statement Condemning regime atrocities

In September 2022, the Arakan National Party (ANP) issued a statement strongly condemning the military junta's aerial bombardments, which resulted in civilian casualties and the widespread

destruction of civilian homes and property. In response to this statement, the junta-controlled Union Election Commission (UEC) summoned party officials and warned the party not to release "one-sided" statements in the future.

April 2023

(b) All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC) Launches Campaign Against Junta's Sham Election

The All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC) spearheaded a campaign calling for a decisive rejection of the military junta's "sham election" as a necessary step toward liberation from military rule. The campaign urged the public to boycott the polls and refrain from participating in any part of the electoral process.

(c) Dissolution of Ethnic Minority Parties Due to Restrictive Election Laws

The Arakan League for Democracy (ALD), the Daingnet National Development Party, and the Kaman National Development Party were officially dissolved as political parties after failing to re-register under the military junta's restrictive new Political Parties Registration Law. Officials from the Daingnet and Kaman National Development Parties stated in regional media outlets that even during their period of active operations, they never enjoyed the full political rights afforded to larger parties. They noted that their role was largely limited to merely presenting the grievances of their respective ethnic groups, rather than exercising genuine political influence.

July 2023

(d) UEC warns Arakan State Political Parties not to engage with Armed Groups

On July 11, 2023, the junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) convened a meeting in Sittwe with five political parties officially permitted to register in Arakan: the Arakan Front Party (AFP), the Arakan National Unity Party, the Mro National Party, the Khami National Party, and the Mro National Development Party. During the meeting, the UEC issued a severe warning, mandating that these parties strictly adhere to the commission's laws and regulations and not have communication or affiliation with armed organizations.

2023 November

(e) Dissolution of the Registered Mro National Party Due to Non-Compliance of the Election Law

Despite having successfully re-registered with the junta's Union Election Commission (UEC), the Mro Ethnic Party was subsequently dissolved as a legal political party after failing to meet mandatory statutory requirements within the prescribed timeframe. The primary reason for the party's dissolution included its inability to recruit the minimum threshold of 1,000 party members within 90 days and the failure to establish party offices in at least five townships within 180 days, as mandated by the junta's restrictive election Law.

January 2024

(f) Silence of Rakhine Political Parties Amidst Junta Atrocities

Prior to and during the early stages of the coup, Arakan political parties were known for their vocal and courageous defense of the public, frequently denouncing human rights violations and atrocities committed by the Myanmar military. However, local observers now criticize these parties for their collective silence in the face of ongoing crises. When questioned regarding their silence, Dr. Aye Maung, Chairman of the Arakan Front Party (AFP), declined to comment. Meanwhile, an official from the Arakan National Party (ANP) explained that their ability to advocate for the people has been effectively restricted by the restrictive provisions of the junta's "Political Parties Registration Law."

2024 June

(g) Junta Arrested Former ANP Youth Leader Ko Gambari and Three Rakhine Youths in Yangon

Ko Gambari, a prominent former youth leader of the Arakan National Party (ANP), along with three other Rakhine youths, was arrested by junta forces during a midnight raid on their residence in Yangon on May 31.

July 2024

(h) UEC rejected the registration application of the Arakan National Party (ANP)

The junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) officially rejected the Arakan National Party's (ANP) application for political party registration. According to an announcement by the military-run Myawady TV, the application was dismissed for non-compliance with the provisions of Form (G) under the Political Parties Registration Rules.

August 2025

(i) Arakan Army (AA) Declares Junta Elections Prohibited in Controlled Territories

U Khaing Thukha, spokesperson for the Arakan Army (AA), stated "Elections held by successive Bamar governments in Rakhine State have never yielded any tangible benefits for the Rakhine people. Therefore, it is certain that the people of Rakhine have no interest in this upcoming election."

November 2025

(j) Rohingya Consultative Council (RCC) Denounces Sham Election

On November 24, the Rohingya Consultative Council (RCC) released a formal statement condemning the military junta's preparations for a "sham election." The RCC also mentioned that the electoral process fundamentally disregards the will of the people.

(k) UEC Announces Inability to Hold Elections in 71 Wards and Village Tracts in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu

U Than Soe, Chairman of the junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) issued a decree announcing that the first phase of the election cannot be conducted in 71 wards and village tracts across Sittwe, the state capital and Kyaukphyu.

3. Findings

1. In the post-coup era, the expansion of the military sphere has drastically restricted the survival and operational capacity of political parties. Even parties with significant public mandates, such as the Arakan National Party (ANP), faced aggressive oversight. The junta-controlled UEC frequently issued summons and warnings to these organizations, explicitly threatening them against any affiliation with armed groups.

2. The intersection of armed conflict and political activity resulted in severe consequences for leadership, exemplified by the arrest of the ANP youth leader and the subsequent rejection of the party's registration. According to records by the Center for Arakan Studies, as of March 2023, six out of the ten Rakhine-based political parties, including the ANP and AFP, initially sought re-registration. However, four parties, which were the ALD, and the Kaman, Daingnet, and Mro minority parties, declined to register under the junta's laws. The ANP's application was formally rejected, while the Rakhine National Party (RNP), led by U Ba Shein, emerged as a new political party.

3. A significant challenge for Rakhine-based political parties was navigating the "narrow corridor" between public sentiment and the dictates of the military junta. Following the escalation of armed conflict in November 2023 and the subsequent surge in human rights violations by the junta, parties intent on contesting the elections, including the AFP, were forced into a state of silence. They found themselves in an untenable position: squeezed between the junta's restrictions and the anti-election stance of the ULA/AA, which commands broad popular support.

4. The junta's newly enacted Political Parties Registration Law served as a formidable structural barrier. For parties seeking to contest only at the state level, the requirements to recruit 1,000 members within 90 days and establish offices in at least five townships within 180 days, leading to the dissolution of the Mro National Party. While minor amendments were later introduced, they offered little relief to minority parties. Furthermore, during the campaign period and on polling day, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) enjoyed significantly greater operational freedom than local Rakhine parties. Ultimately, bolstered by bloc voting from military personnel ("army votes"), prominent Rakhine political figures such as Dr. Aye Maung and U Ba Shein suffered electoral defeats in the key constituencies of Sittwe and Kyaukphyu.

5. The intensification of military operations and subsequent shifts in territorial control since late 2023 have acted as a primary constraint on the survival and operational viability of political parties. In late 2025, the "electoral exercise" in Rakhine was restricted to the urban areas of Sittwe

and Kyaukphyu, along with Manaung Township. This limited participation represents less than 5% of the total geographic area of Rakhine State. Consequently, the credibility of the election is profoundly compromised, creating a significant crisis of legitimacy for both the electoral process and the purported "elected representatives."

4. Analysis

Under Myanmar's legislative structure, the Parliament consists of three chambers: the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House), the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), and the State/Region Hluttaw. For the 2025 elections, the implementation of a Proportional Representation (PR) system and First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) combined model resulted in a modest number of elected representatives from Rakhine-based parties, specifically the AFP and RNP. In contrast, local ethnic minority parties, such as the Khami and Mro parties, failed to secure a single seat.

Unlike the democratic transition period between 2010 and 2020, the political parties and representatives emerging from this election face a severe crisis of legitimacy despite a new government and parliament to be convened in the coming months. The ongoing escalation of fighting near Sittwe (the location of the state government and parliament) continues to pose a severe threat. Furthermore, the persistent loss of civilian lives due to the junta's airstrikes, the profound lack of domestic popular support, and the absence of international recognition remain formidable challenges that Rakhine-based political parties must navigate.

From one analytical perspective, the question arises whether these parties could potentially be a "bridge" for trust-building and peace negotiations between the Naypyidaw-based military regime and the influential Arakan People's Government of (ULA/AA) in Arakan. However, given their dwindling public mandate and the deep-seated tensions and ideological fractures defining the current political landscape, these parties appear more like "pawns" than independent actors. Under the present conditions, they are likely to remain mere instruments in the military regime's political theater, serving as symbolic facades rather than genuine representatives of the people.

About Center for Arakan Studies

The Center for Arakan Studies is an independent, non-partisan research organization established in December 2021 by journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers. The Center aims to enhance understanding of Arakan affairs by publishing rigorous research on human rights conditions, political, economic, and social developments in Arakan, as well as issues related to Arakan within Myanmar and internationally. The Center produces policy briefs and monthly reports on topics related to Arakan, which are published through its website and various publications.

© 2026 Arakan

Contact – info@arakanstudies.org, www.arakanstudies.org