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Fire from Sky and Sea: Junta Strikes Devastate Kyaukphyu and Mrauk-U

Monitoring of a brief situation of political tension, economic issues, social issues, and humanitarian issues in Arakan in August 2025.



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Photo Credit via Ni Mi Tun Journalist

Executive Summary

- Junta airstrikes and naval attacks in Kyaukphyu and Mrauk-U killed civilians, including 14 in Mrauk-U, displacing over 50,000 in Kyaukphyu by August 30. The Arakan Army (AA) clashed with junta forces, seized territories, and faced accusations of detaining fishermen and targeting Rohingya. Violence forced villagers to flee Kyaukphyu and Ponnagyun, with markets closing in AA areas. Cross-border tensions rose with ARSA attacks on AA outposts and junta claims of AA's external links, which AA denied.
- High medical costs and joblessness hit Kyauktaw, Gwa, and Thandwe, with a junta fishing ban hurting Kyaukphyu fishermen. Floods destroyed rice fields, and the India-Arakan trade route closure stranded merchants. Rising fuel prices drove solar system use, and border towns increasingly used foreign currencies. AA's income tax in Maungdaw and junta's strict Sittwe screenings further strained economies.
- The AA launched midwifery training and education plans but faced opposition to junta elections in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu. Human trafficking saw Arakanese women sold in China, while crime spurred Kyauktaw neighborhood watches. Free medical clinics operated in Thandwe and Ponnagyun, and women's training was held in Maungdaw. The Rakhine Nationalities Party began its election campaign amid AA's ban on teen tobacco and alcohol sales in Paletwa.
- Famine in Sittwe led to deaths and state aid of Ks762.96 million, while 57% of central Arakan families faced food shortages. Floods killed 21, affected 40,000, and destroyed 20,000 acres of paddy fields. The UN accused the junta of blocking aid, with over 200 Rohingya stranded on Naf River and others fleeing to Bangladesh. Dengue outbreaks in Maungdaw and UNICEF's concerns over child victims in Mrauk-U worsened the crisis.

Key Developments

A. Politics and Armed Conflicts

1. Resumption of Intense Fighting in Kyaukphyu

Fighting resumed in Kyaukphyu after a period of calm, escalating with junta airstrikes, naval bombardments, and drone attacks. On August 15, clashes [intensified](#) as junta forces reinforced their positions. A drone attack on August 17 [killed](#) two internally displaced persons (IDPs) and wounded five others, while over 30 civilian casualties were reported in six months of junta attacks in Kyaukphyu Township. These events highlight the ongoing violence and its severe impact on civilians.

2. Junta Airstrikes and Civilian Casualties in Mrauk-U

A remnant bomb blast in Mrauk-U on August 5 killed a three-year-old and injured four others. Overnight junta bombings targeted Mrauk-U, Kyaukphyu, and Rathedaung on August 9. On August 27, a junta airstrike on a Mrauk-U neighborhood [resulted](#) in 14 civilian deaths, drawing strong condemnation from the Rakhine State Students' Union. These incidents underscore the junta's indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas.

3. Arakan Army's (AA) Actions and Allegations of Human Rights Violations

The AA faced accusations of human rights abuses, including the alleged unlawful detention of 23 fishermen in Maungdaw (August 9) and targeting Rohingya communities in Maungdaw and Buthidaung (August 22). On August 11, the AA accused the junta of killing over 900 civilians in the Arakan conflict. Reports also emerged of the AA [detaining](#) Bangladeshi fishermen for illegal fishing (August 13, 26, 28) and seizing ARSA military gear in Maungdaw (August 19). These events reflect the complex dynamics of the AA's operations and regional tensions.

General Overview

In August 2025, Rakhine State saw escalated conflict with Myanmar's junta launching airstrikes and naval attacks in Kyaukphyu and Mrauk-U, causing significant civilian casualties, including 14 deaths in a Mrauk-U airstrike. The Arakan Army (AA) clashed with junta forces, seized territories, and faced accusations of human rights abuses against Rohingya and detaining Bangladeshi fishermen. The junta's election preparations in select townships were opposed by the AA, which rejected elections in its controlled areas. Cross-border tensions rose with Bangladeshi fishing incursions and ARSA attacks on AA outposts.

B. Economy

1. Human Trafficking Crisis

Two Arakanese women [were trafficked](#) and sold as brides in China, highlighting a severe human trafficking issue in the region. This incident underscores the vulnerability of local communities amidst ongoing conflict and economic instability, drawing attention to the need for international intervention to address cross-border exploitation.

2. Flooding and Agricultural Devastation

Flooding across Rakhine State [destroyed](#) rice fields, leaving farmers unable to replant and exacerbating food insecurity. This natural disaster compounded existing economic challenges, threatening livelihoods in an already conflict-ridden region and highlighting the urgent need for agricultural recovery support.

3. AA's Administrative Expansion and Regional Tensions

The Arakan Army (AA) [pledged](#) to protect foreign projects in Rakhine State (August 13) and began collecting income tax in Maungdaw (August 19), signaling efforts to establish governance in controlled areas. China's demand to the Myanmar junta to secure its interests in Kyaukphyu (August 31) [reflects](#) heightened regional stakes. These actions highlight the AA's growing influence amid tensions with external stakeholders.

Summarized Overview

In August 2025, Rakhine State faced significant challenges driven by human trafficking, with two Arakanese women sold as brides in China, and natural disasters, as floods destroyed rice fields, worsening food insecurity. Economic strains intensified with the closure of the India-Arakan trade route, stranding merchants, and the increasing use of foreign currencies in border towns like Maungdaw. The AA

expanded its administrative control through income tax collection in Maungdaw, a ban on tobacco and alcohol sales to teens in Paletwa, and pledges to protect foreign projects, notably in response to China's demands for security in Kyaukphyu. Fear of junta airstrikes drove migration from Kyauktaw and Mrauk-U, while local authorities addressed crime and economic issues through actions like drug busts in Minbya and surveys of communal farmlands.

C. Social Issues

1. Severe Food and Health Crisis in Sittwe

Severe food shortages in Sittwe led to tragic suicides by a man and a woman unable to endure hunger on August 6, with the majority of civilians facing shortages of food and essentials [by August 7](#). Economic distress and war-related impacts drove a rise in family suicides by August 20, highlighting the dire humanitarian situation. The Myanmar junta's harsh screenings for [entering Sittwe](#) city (August 9) further restricted access to resources, exacerbating the crisis.

2. Flooding and Drowning Incidents Impact Communities

Floods across Rakhine State, reported on August 13, drowned 21 residents, affected over 40,000 people, and destroyed nearly 20,000 acres of paddy fields, severely impacting agricultural communities. On August 19, three family members [drowned](#) in the Lay Myo River in Mrauk-U while attempting to access the internet, underscoring the desperate conditions and lack of infrastructure. These incidents highlight the compounding effects of natural disasters and conflict on vulnerable populations.

3. AA's Health and Education Initiatives Amid Challenges

The Arakan Army's (AA) Health Department [announced](#) a midwifery training school on August 11, calling for applications by August 19, to address healthcare gaps in AA-controlled areas. The AA also touted sweeping education plans for Arakan State on August 11, but free education centers for over 2,000 IDP students in multiple townships [faced funding](#) shortages by August 27. These efforts reflect the AA's attempts to establish governance amidst ongoing conflict and resource constraints.

Summarized Overview

In August 2025, Rakhine State faced a severe humanitarian crisis, with food shortages in Sittwe driving suicides and junta screenings restricting resource access, while floods and drowning incidents, including 21 deaths and three in Mrauk-U, compounded economic and health challenges. Locals in Kyauktaw, Gwa, and Kyaukphyu struggled with high medical costs, joblessness, and a junta fishing ban, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity. The AA launched health and education initiatives, including a midwifery school and education plans, but faced funding issues for IDP schools. Rising crime prompted neighborhood watches in Kyauktaw, while junta airstrike fears led to market closures and internet service suspensions in AA-controlled areas, further disrupting daily life.

D. Humanitarian Issue

1. Famine and Aid Response in Sittwe

On August 6, famine-related suicides in Sittwe highlighted severe food shortages, with the majority of civilians facing shortages of essentials by August 7. On August 8, the state government [provided](#)

Ks762.96 million in cash and dried noodles to internally displaced people (IDPs). The World Food Programme reported on August 13 that 57% of central Arakan families could not meet basic food needs, underscoring the acute humanitarian crisis.

2. Massive Flooding and Displacement

On August 13, floods across Rakhine State drowned 21 residents, [impacted](#) over 40,000 people, and destroyed nearly 20,000 acres of paddy fields in townships like Taungup, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyun, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung. This disaster worsened food insecurity and displaced communities, compounding the challenges of ongoing conflict and economic hardship.

3. Escalating Conflict and Civilian Displacement in Kyaukphyu and Ponnagyun

On August 18, intensified junta-Arakan Army (AA) fighting in Kyaukphyu [forced](#) residents from three villages to flee, with over 50,000 IDPs reported by August 30 due to ongoing battles. Artillery shelling in Ponnagyun on August 30 displaced more villagers, while UNICEF expressed concern on August 29 about children affected by bombings in Mrauk-U, highlighting the conflict's severe humanitarian impact.

Summarized Overview

In August 2025, Rakhine State faced a severe humanitarian crisis, with famine driving suicides in Sittwe by August 6–7, prompting state aid of Ks762.96 million on August 8, while 57% of central Arakan families struggled with food insecurity, as noted by the WFP on August 13. Floods on August 13 killed 21 residents, affected 40,000 people, and destroyed 20,000 acres of crops, exacerbating displacement. Junta-AA clashes in Kyaukphyu and Ponnagyun from August 18–30 displaced over 50,000 people, with UNICEF raising concerns about child victims of Mrauk-U bombings on August 29. The UN accused the junta of blocking aid on August 14, while over 200 Rohingya were stranded on Naf River islands on August 29, and others fled to Bangladesh by August 23 due to escalating poverty and conflict.

About the Report

This report is part of the CAS's monthly series, which delves into four key areas of the state of Arakan. The first section addresses political concerns, including the armed revolution, junta activities, and issues of political freedom. The second examines the state's economic climate, focusing on rising prices, declining demand, foreign direct investment, and border trade. The third and fourth sections cover social and humanitarian issues, respectively; these include education, health, migration, and the internally displaced persons (IDP) population.

Key data in the report are sourced from local media outlets, such as DMG, Western News, among others. The aim of this report is to shed new light on the situation for observers endeavoring to comprehend the dynamics at play in the region.

About Center for Arakan Studies (CAS)

The Center is an independent, non-partisan research institution established in December 2021 by a group of young professionals, including journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers.

The Center aims to promote understanding of human rights, political, economic, and social dynamics in Arakan and related issues within Myanmar and beyond. Through rigorous research and reporting, the Center seeks to address the policy gaps with analysis and recommendations to support democratic change and collective solutions.

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