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Winds of War and Want: Tale of Trajectories and Turmoil in Arakan

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



Photo Credit via Ni Mi Tun Journalist

Executive Summary

- Rakhine State in October 2025 saw escalating violence with ARSA executing ethnic civilians, mass junta surrenders to AA at Nat Yekan, and over 970 civilian deaths from military operations amid relentless airstrikes. AA seized strategic control while imposing governance measures and facing conscription allegations, as civil society pushed for UN recognition against the regime's sham elections and deepening humanitarian crisis.
- The region also faced severe economic turmoil and cross-border strains, highlighted by Bangladesh Coast Guard seizing cement smugglers, UNDP reporting nearly 4 million unemployed youth in Myanmar, and gold prices nearing K9 million per tical amid soaring essentials. Local industries collapsed, farmers battled pests without aid, and trafficking persisted, underscoring fragile livelihoods, youth despair, and governance failures in a conflict-ravaged region.
- Junta-controlled parts of Rakhine grappled with acute humanitarian collapse, as soaring funeral costs left bodies unburied in Sittwe, five IDP schools for nearly 1,000 displaced children faced closure in Sittwe, and four civilians were murdered on Ngapali Beach. Widespread hunger, healthcare failure, arbitrary detentions, and stranded returnees underscored deepening desperation and governance breakdown amid escalating lawlessness.
- Residents of the region also faced a deepening humanitarian catastrophe amid conflict and aid restrictions, exemplified by thousands in Sittwe turning to monastic rice donations for survival, ULA/AA's reconstruction of a mosque and 100 homes in Rohingya-majority Htan Shauk Khan to foster reconciliation, and UNHCR's initiation of new housing for IDPs in Sittwe alongside ICRC sanitation efforts. Surging displacement in Kyaukphyu and Maungdaw, coupled with urgent needs for winter clothing and blankets, highlighted acute hunger affecting 57% of families, malnutrition spikes among children, and blocked access exacerbating ethnic vulnerabilities for Rohingya and others.

Key Developments

A. Politics and Armed Conflicts: Three Key Highlights

1. 1-Oct-25: ARSA executes six Arakanese civilians in Maungdaw

Bodies of six ethnic Rakhine civilians, [shot and abandoned](#) by ARSA militants, were discovered in Maungdaw's border jungle—AA condemned the killings as targeted ethnic violence amid rising insurgent attacks on non-Muslims.

2. 17–18-Oct-25: Mass junta surrender at Nat Yekan strategic hill

Dozens of regime soldiers [fled in disarray](#) from Nat Yekan Air Defense Base on Ann-Padan Road, raising white flags and surrendering en masse to AA forces; deserters were captured while others abandoned weapons, marking a humiliating collapse after weeks of reinforcement attempts.

3. 29-Oct-25: HDCO reports 970 civilian deaths from junta operations

Human rights monitor HDCO [documented](#) 970 civilians killed and 2,054 injured across Rakhine State since the start of military offensives, with a five-year-old girl among three killed by junta shelling in Pauktaw—31 civil society groups issued a joint condemnation (30-Oct).

Summarized Overview

From 1-Oct to 31-Oct-25, Rakhine State endured fierce AA-junta clashes, ARSA insurgent attacks, and deepening civilian suffering. The military bombarded townships with airstrikes and artillery, killing dozens including 23 in September bombings and 10 on 31-Oct across Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, and Kyaukphyu, while AA seized strategic hills like Nat Yekan amid mass surrenders and controlled most

areas despite withdrawals in Kyaukphyu. ARSA killed or injured 57 civilians in northern townships over six months, clashing with AA near the Bangladesh border where BGB heightened alerts and allegations of indirect support emerged; landmines claimed 17 lives in nine months. Over 200 civil society groups urged UN recognition of ULA/AA (3-Oct) as the regime advanced sham elections and exploited the NCA 10th anniversary (16–18-Oct), while AA imposed taxes, security orders, and alleged forced Rohingya conscription in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, prompting local outrage and international scrutiny.

B. Economy: Three Key Highlights

1. 1-Oct-25: Bangladesh Coast Guard intercepts cement smuggling to Rakhine

The Bangladesh Coast Guard [seized over 30 individuals](#) and more than 1,200 bags of cement being smuggled via waterways from Bangladesh to Rakhine State, amid heightened tensions and deteriorating bilateral relations that have intensified cross-border commodity trafficking.

2. 3-Oct-25: UNDP reveals youth unemployment crisis in Myanmar

A UNDP report [highlighted that](#) nearly 4 million Myanmar youth—one in four—are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), with rates highest among women (25%) and in conflict zones like Rakhine (32%), underscoring eroded pathways amid political instability and economic contraction.

3. 27-Oct-25: Gold prices surge to nearly K9 million per tical in Arakan

Gold prices in AA-controlled areas of Arakan State [approached K9 million](#) per tical, driven by currency devaluation and economic turmoil, exacerbating local hardships as basic commodities also skyrocketed in junta-held towns like Sittwe and Kyaukphyu.

Summarized Overview

From 1-Oct to 31-Oct-25, Rakhine State and surrounding areas grappled with deepening economic distress and cross-border vulnerabilities amid ongoing conflict. Soaring prices of basic goods devastated grassroots communities in Sittwe (16-Oct) and Kyaukphyu (24-Oct), forcing reliance on minimal staples, while local industries faltered due to shortages of technology and raw materials (6-Oct). Farmers in AA-controlled areas urgently required aid for winter crop planting (9-Oct) as pests ravaged rice fields in several townships (10-Oct), threatening food security. Cross-border issues escalated with Bangladesh Coast Guard seizures of cement smuggling to Rakhine (1-Oct) and reports of illegal arms trafficking via seven routes from Myanmar (14-Oct). Nationally, UNDP exposed a youth unemployment crisis affecting nearly 4 million (3-Oct), three brokers were sentenced to 10 years for trafficking eight Sittwe women to China as brides (6-Oct), and the junta courted Chinese investment in oil and gas expansion (23-Oct). Calls grew for testing unsafe local liquors in AA areas (21-Oct) to curb health risks, highlighting fragile governance and humanitarian strains in a volatile region.

C. Social Issues: Three Key Highlights

1. 1-Oct-25: Funeral costs soar, leaving bodies unburied in Sittwe

In junta-controlled Sittwe, burial expenses [skyrocketed](#) to unaffordable levels, forcing families to leave deceased relatives unburied for days—exposing acute economic desperation, inflation, and the breakdown of basic dignity under military rule amid widespread poverty and restricted aid.

2. 11-Oct-25: Five IDP schools for nearly 1,000 Rakhine students to close

Five makeshift schools in Ann and Kyauktaw, educating nearly 1,000 children displaced by conflict from Rakhine State, [face imminent shutdown](#) due to complete lack of funding—jeopardizing education for war-traumatized youth and risking a lost generation in AA- and junta-affected zones.

3. 16-Oct-25: Four civilians found murdered on Ngapali Beach

Four civilian bodies [were discovered brutally murdered](#) and dumped on Thandwe’s scenic Ngapali Beach—a rare tourist area under junta control—signaling rising lawlessness, possible targeted killings, and growing fear even in supposedly secure coastal regions.

Summarized Overview

From 1-Oct to 31-Oct-25, junta-held Rakhine areas endured severe humanitarian strain. Funeral costs left bodies unburied in Sittwe (1-Oct), while healthcare collapsed in Manaung and hunger spread due to blockades (16-Oct). Four civilians were murdered on Ngapali Beach (16-Oct), and five IDP schools faced closure (11-Oct). Arbitrary arrests, abductions, and naval detentions escalated amid junta propaganda events and selective phone restorations. About 500 returnees from Yangon remained stranded in Kyaukphyu (15-Oct), and a child died of malaria in Paletwa (17-Oct).

D. Humanitarian Issue: Three Key Highlights

1. 12-Oct-25: Thousands gather for Mrauk U Sayadaw’s rice donation in Sittwe

Thousands of hunger-stricken residents in junta-controlled Sittwe [flocked](#) to a massive rice donation event led by the revered Mrauk U Sayadaw, highlighting acute food insecurity and reliance on monastic aid amid junta blockades and economic collapse.

2. 22-Oct-25: ULA/AA restores mosque and 100 homes in Htan Shauk Khan

The ULA/AA [rebuilt](#) a mosque and 100 homes in the Rohingya village of Htan Shauk Khan, Buthidaung—a rare gesture of reconstruction and community reconciliation in a region scarred by years of destruction and ethnic tensions.

3. 31-Oct-25: UNHCR constructs new homes for Sittwe IDPs

UNHCR began [building new housing](#) for displaced persons in Sittwe, providing shelter to conflict-affected families in junta areas, while ICRC earlier installed toilets and bathrooms (24-Oct), signaling targeted international aid amid rising displacement.

Summarized Overview

From 1-Oct to 31-Oct-25, Rakhine State and adjacent areas faced escalating humanitarian needs amid ongoing conflict. IDPs in Rathedaung (18-Oct), Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Thandwe, and Gwa (21-Oct) urgently required warm clothes and blankets as winter approached, while thousands in Sittwe relied on monastic rice donations due to hunger (12-Oct). Women and youth suffered disproportionate losses in employment and education from the Arakan conflict (10-Oct), with conscription laws fueling widespread insecurity (14-Oct). AA restored a mosque and 100 homes in Buthidaung (22-Oct) and began repatriation registration for Rohingya (29-Oct), while UNHCR built new homes in Sittwe (31-Oct) and ICRC added sanitation facilities (24-Oct). Displacement surged in Kyaukphyu (27-Oct) and northern Maungdaw due to ARSA threats (28-Oct), with the US urging armed groups including AA to protect civilians (1-Oct).

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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