



Myanmar Junta's Sham Elections from Arakan Perspective

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About Center for Arakan Studies (CAS)

The Center is an independent, non-partisan and research institution established in December 2021 by a group of young professionals including journalists, political analysts, researchers as well as social workers. The Center aims to promote the understanding of the situation of human rights, politics, economics, and social dynamics in Arakan, as well as issues related to Arakan affairs in Myanmar and beyond, through the publication of rigorous research papers.

The Center also intends to address the policy gaps in Arakan and Myanmar in general through analysis and recommendations in favor of democratic policy change and common solutions. The Center publishes a series of monthly reports, along with the policy briefing issues related to Arakan affairs, on its website and through various publications.

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Photo - Dr. Aye Maung, AFP Chief and his followers during an election campaign in Sittwe
(source-Western News)

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Executive Summary

- The 2025 elections in Myanmar were conducted amid ongoing armed conflicts, territorial fragmentation, and political suppression and repression, functioning primarily as a managed authoritarian process rather than a mechanism for democratic representation. Building on historical patterns of electoral manipulation and annulment, the junta used the elections to project constitutional continuity while maintaining effective military control over political participation and outcomes.
- In the pre-election period, the junta systematically engineered the political environment to eliminate electoral uncertainty. Key measures included the banning and dissolution of electorally legitimate parties such as the NLD, SNLD, and ANP; the enforcement of restrictive legal frameworks under the Political Parties Registration Law and Election Protection Law; and the partial shift to proportional representation, which fragmented opposition votes and favored military-aligned parties with administrative access and coercive capacity.
- In Arakan, electoral participation was territorially selective and institutionally severed from local political realities. Polling was limited to three junta-controlled townships—Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung—while large areas under ULA/AA were excluded entirely. Even within Sittwe and Kyaukphyu townships, majority of wards and village tracts were omitted, reinforcing de facto political partition and denying institutional representation to much of the population.
- Election-day dynamics in Arakan demonstrated that voter participation was driven largely by coercion, fear of reprisal, and logistical constraint, rather than political preference. Residents reported forced mobilization by party representatives, heavy military and police deployment, artillery shelling near populated areas, and technical failures in electronic voting machines, all of which undermined transparency, voluntariness, and public confidence in the process.
- Despite the junta's reported nationwide voter turnout figures, actual voting in Arakan was visibly low and uneven. In Sittwe, Rohingya Muslim communities showed significantly higher turnout than ethnic Rakhine voters. As a result, electoral outcomes were largely shaped by deep political and demographic divides: the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) secured seats in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, largely due to stronger participation from Rohingya/Muslim voters as well as military personnel and government employees. In contrast, Rakhine-based political parties such as the Arakan Front Party (AFP) and Rakhine National Party (RNP) performed better in areas like Manaung, where there are no Rohingya residents and only a very small number of military and government staff.
- The post-election political impacts in Arakan are significant. The elections further eroded trust in formal political institutions, reinforced public perceptions that junta-led electoral politics cannot address local grievances related to autonomy and security, and indirectly strengthened reliance on parallel governance structures, particularly those operated by the ULA/AA, for political voice, protection, and dispute resolution.

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Timeline Covering Elections and Conflict Related Events in Arakan



Part I-Introduction

A. Brief Information of Myanmar's Electoral Politics in History

A state's electoral system is crucial for democracy and accountable governance, with free and fair elections being essential. But, frequently, elections have been shaped or nullified by coercion, conflict, and direct military intervention, by recurring cycles of military intervention. Even before independence, the April [1947 election](#), held to establish a Constituent Assembly rather than a parliament, were conducted under severe security restrictions, voter coercion, and the exclusion of large parts of the country, with turnout falling below 50 percent. Although the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) [dominated](#) the outcome, the process lacked strong democratic legitimacy and was further undermined by the assassination of Aung San and other leaders later that year.

After gaining independence in 1948, Myanmar held its first multiparty parliamentary elections in [1951–52](#) amidst the armed struggles and political instabilities, bringing U Nu to power. Armed conflicts and political instability excluded large areas and kept voter turnout below 20 percent, limiting legitimacy. Since then, Myanmar has held nationwide elections under changing systems: competitive parliamentary democracy in the 1950s, one-party socialist elections ([1974–1985](#)), and a hybrid military-dominated system [after 2010](#). Of these elections, only ten resulted in governments actually taking office, underscoring the persistent gap between electoral processes and genuine civilian office.

Elections in [1956 and 1960](#) saw higher participation, but elite rivalry and instability led to the 1962 military coup, ending parliamentary democracy. Coups in 1962 and 2021 illustrate how Myanmar's electoral design has consistently preserved military primacy. Under military rule since 1962, [elections and referendums](#) from the non-competitive military-led Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) polls in 1973 to the tightly controlled 2010 elections served elite interests rather than public will while referendums such as those in 1973 and 2008 functioned as tightly managed performances to legitimize continued military dominance. The 2010 elections under a tightly controlled constitutional framework similarly failed to open meaningful political space, with the [military-backed](#) the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), dominating parliament and limited representation for ethnic parties, reinforcing perceptions that elections served elite interests more than popular will.

However, starting from the Thein Sein government (2011–2015) and the National League for Democracy (NLD) victories in [2015](#) created a small light for democratic transition of the state, despite some openness, the [2008 Constitution](#) ensured the military remained at the apex of power, controlling a quarter of parliamentary seats and appointing key ministers- defense, home affairs, and border affairs- thereby retaining ultimate authority over security and border trade in frontier

regions. Still, the last recent [2020 election](#) before coup with NLD landslide victory, yet in conflict-affected regions like Rakhine, insecurity and armed clashes limited participation and representation. Although the 2015 and [2020](#) elections saw significant public enthusiasm and victories for the NLD, in ethnic frontier regions like Rakhine ongoing conflict with the Arakan Army (AA) made meaningful participation difficult, with polling canceled in insecure areas and ethnic constituencies remaining underrepresented, further illustrating how formal electoral mechanisms could neither resolve grievances nor prevent outbreaks of violence.

The 2021 coup annulled [the 2020 results](#), deepening public disillusionment and driving even the majority ethnic Bamar community toward armed politics, including the formation of People's Defense Forces (PDFs) and alliances among ethnic armed groups, highlighting how repeated electoral failures and constitutional engineering and electoral design have consistently preserved military dominance over civilian rule.

B. Cycles of Electoral and Armed Politics

In Arakan, electoral politics have historically failed to address local aspirations. In the 1950s, Arakanese parties such as [Independent Arakanese Parliamentary Group \(got six\)](#) and [Arakanese National Unity Organization \(got five\)](#) won only limited representation and remained marginalized within a centralized state. Under [military and socialist rules](#), ethnic representation was eliminated, erasing Arakanese political space, while state governance remained subordinate to central authorities and local grievances over resources, security, and recognition went unaddressed.

For all ethnic political perspectives including Arakan region, the nullification of the [1990 elections](#) in which the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) achieved an electoral victory showed that participation did not guarantee political power. Subsequent constitutions relied on military-loyal delegates, with the 2008 Constitution entrenching military dominance through reserved seats and veto powers. [The 2010 general elections](#), widely manipulated, produced a military-backed government, while Rakhine representative Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) won a majority constituencies in the state.

Yet, local ethnic parties were not shared political power and from an Arakan perspective, repeated cycles of manipulated elections throughout the eras of military to semi-civilian governances, ignored mandates, and centralized authority have eroded public faith in electoral politics as a viable pathway to political change.

A similar situation emerged when the Arakan National Party (ANP) comprised of both old RNDP and ALD fractions won an electoral victory in the state's parliament but the winning NLD forming central government did not share power. The failure of successive governments to address political autonomy, equitable resource sharing, and civilian protection contributed directly to the emergence and consolidation of armed movements. In this context, armed politics arose not in opposition to

democratic ideals, but as a response to the systematic denial of representation and self-determination through electoral means.

As the military prepares to hold in December 2025 elections in stages, it claims these polls aim to restore civilian participation in governance and return the country to a democratic path. However, international observers widely criticize this, arguing that the process is intended to legitimize the junta's unlawful hold on power rather than enable genuine democracy. And, this time, a local armed movement led by the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) has controlled more than 90 percent of the state's territory limiting the electoral space to only two towns of Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and island of Manaung.

In regions such as Arakan, where armed conflict, displacement, and parallel governance exist, participation is largely limited or symbolic, echoing historical patterns in which elections served elite interests more than public will. For Arakan, thus, such elections have repeatedly failed to reflect public will or resolve long-standing political grievances, calling into question the credibility and purpose of any future polls organized by the junta.

C. Literature Review

Beyond authoritarianism, elections amid active armed conflict rarely promote peace, representation, or legitimacy. Conducted in environments of violence, territorial fragmentation, displacement, and weak institutions, they often reflect existing power imbalances and [reinforce armed actors' dominance](#). For example, [Afghanistan's elections from 2004–2019](#), held under partial Taliban control, saw selective voting, low credibility, and uneven turnout, ultimately contributing to elite fragmentation, public disillusionment, and state collapse in 2021. This illustrates how elections without territorial control and political settlement can fail to generate legitimacy.

Similarly, Sri Lanka held multiple elections [during its civil war](#) with the the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but these were largely confined to government-controlled areas, excluding large segments of the Tamil population. While elections allowed the state to project constitutional normalcy, they entrenched ethnic polarization and did little to address underlying grievances related to autonomy and political inclusion. [Scholars Höglund & Svensson \(2009\) argue](#) that such selective electoral participation reinforced conflict dynamics rather than resolving them. In Iraq, [post-2003 elections](#) were held amid sectarian violence and insurgency, with insecurity and boycotts excluding many voters. Rather than fostering inclusive governance, these elections mirrored ethnic divisions and contributed to political fragmentation and instability. Again, [in Syria](#), presidential elections were held only in regime-controlled areas amid ongoing civil war, excluding millions of displaced and opposition-held populations and serving more to legitimize Assad's rule than to reflect popular will, thereby normalizing authoritarian control rather than fostering genuine political representation. This pattern underscores how elections in militarized contexts can normalize coercion rather than constrain it.

Through those cases above, several recurring features of conflict elections can be unified. They often feature selective territorial participation, coercion, exclusion of displaced populations, and dominance of armed actors, turning voting into a ritualized exercise of control rather than [genuine consent](#). Beyond these empirical observations, research on ethnopolitical conflicts highlights that elections in deeply divided societies carry both promise and risk. Electoral processes in such contexts are shaped by elite strategies, institutional design, and societal divisions, where timing, sequencing, administration, and choice of electoral system critically influence [outcomes](#). Poorly timed or manipulated elections may exacerbate tensions rather than foster peace, as shown in post-conflict settings such as Mozambique, Cambodia, El Salvador, and South Sudan. In ethnically plural societies, elections must be carefully engineered [to balance representation](#), prevent elite capture, and mitigate conflict; otherwise, they tend to reinforce pre-existing hierarchies and marginalize vulnerable populations.

Within this framework, Myanmar's planned 2025 elections conducted amid nationwide armed resistance, parallel administrations, and ongoing military operations closely resemble other conflict elections that have failed to produce legitimacy or peace. In conflict-affected regions such as Arakan, where armed actors exercise de facto authority and large populations remain beyond junta control, elections are unlikely to function as mechanisms of representation. Instead, they risk serving as instruments for consolidating military rule while sidelining unresolved political demands related to autonomy, and self-determination.

D. Structure and Method of the Report

In this report, beyond the introduction, there are three main sections: pre-election preparations, the election period itself, and post-election scenarios. Part II (Pre-Election Period) addresses key issues related to election preparations by the junta, Rakhine-based political parties, and responses from other actors such as the ULA/AA since 2021. In addition, it examines the junta's use of law as a political tool to control and suppress political opponents, the situation of the Rakhine National Race Affairs Minister in the Yangon Region, and finally, the positions of international stakeholders regarding the late 2025 elections.

Part III (During the Election Period) covers incidents and developments from the start of the election campaign on October 28, 2025, through election day, and includes fresh developments immediately after the polls. This section analyzes how political parties conducted their campaigns, highlights their key policies, describes the situation on election day, and presents the election results in both Rakhine and Yangon. Finally, the report discusses the impacts and post-election scenarios for Arakan politics, with critical observations on its evolving relationship with the armed politics currently unfolding in the state.

The methodology of the report is primarily qualitative. Information and data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, despite a highly sensitive security

environment, the CAS team conducted interviews with two election observers—one Rohingya from Sittwe and one Rakhine from Kyaukphyu. CAS team members also gathered insights on pre-election and during-election situations in urban Sittwe and Kyaukphyu. For secondary sources, the report relies mainly on news and reports from local media outlets such as Narinjara, Western News, and Development Media Group (DMG). Naypyidaw government sources, including those from the Ministry of Information and the Union Election Commission (UEC), were also consulted to diversify perspectives. In addition, CAS cited data from both domestic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to better understand and verify the information environment.

Part II- Before the Elections

A. Nationwide and Arakan Political Situations

Many independent analysts and sources claim that Myanmar's situations are not suitable to have meaningful and credible elections in late 2025. Since the illegitimate and (even illegal for many) coup in 2021, the leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD) such as former President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi are still imprisoned. Moreover, the Myanmar junta's new Political Parties Registration Law enacted in January 2023 also caused the NLD and another ethnic nationality popular party such as Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) to officially dissolve as they refused to register in line with the new law on March 28, 2025. Besides, another popular ethnic nationality party from Arakan such as Arakan National Party (ANP), which won the electoral victory in its home state, was also banned from participating in the upcoming elections accusing of having links with the Arakan Army declared as the terrorist group by the Myanmar junta.

The current upcoming election is quite different from the previous 2020 general elections in terms of representation and participation. By means of background, at least 92 political parties [competed](#) in the previous elections and only 17 got at least a seat in the parliaments.

The following table shows the situations of the 17 winning parties¹ in 2020 elections in regard with the 2025 general elections;

No.	Names of the Political Parties	Situations in 2025
1	Arakan National Party (ANP)	Registered but banned on July 1–2, 2024 from participating in the elections in line with Article (7) of the party law.
2	Arakan Front Party (AFP)	Registered and approved on May 2, 2023 to participate in the upcoming elections.
3	Chin National League for Democracy (CHLD)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
4	Kayin Pyithu Party (KPP)	Registered and approved on September 9, 2024 to participate in the upcoming elections.
5	Kayah State Democratic Party (KySDP)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
6	Kachin State Pyithu Party (KSPP)	Registered and approved on August 19, 2024 to participate in the upcoming elections.

¹ Parties that won at least one seat in one of the three parliaments such as Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw), Upper House (Amyotha Hluttaw), and State/Region Parliaments.

7	Lahu National Development Party (LNDP)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
8	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	Registered and approved on September 9, 2024 to participate in the upcoming elections .
9	New Democratic Party (Kachin) (NDP-K)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
10	National League for Democracy (NLD)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
11	Pa-O National Organization (PNO)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law .
12	Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP)	Changed its name into 'Shan and Nationalities Democratic Party' and registered and approved on July 23, 2023 to participate in the upcoming elections .
13	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
14	Ta'ang National Party (TNP)	Officially Dissolved on March 28, 2025 for not registering in line with the new political parties registration law.
15	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	Registered and approved on April 20, 2023 to participate in the upcoming elections.
16	Wa National Party (WNP)	Registered and approved on July 27, 2023 to participate in the upcoming elections.
17	Zomi Congress for Democracy (ZCM)	Registered but banned on August 5, 2024 from participating in the elections in line with Article (6) of the party law.

This table clearly shows that among the 17 winning parties of the 2020 elections, **only 7 parties** which are mostly known as pro-military ones are only allowed to compete in the upcoming 2025 elections. More importantly, even among the seat-winning ones, these parties only won a small number of seats compared to their respective competitors. For instance, USDP won a small percentage of what NLD achieved and the same situations go for between SNLD versus SNDP, ANP versus AFP.

One prominent finding by ASEAN Network For Free Elections (ANFREL) [revealed that](#) the registered parties like USDP, MUP, PNO and others only represented 9.8 percent (110 seats) in the 2020 general election whereas the non-registered ones like NLD, SNLD, ANP and others occupied 90.2 percent (1007 seats).

Records also showed that the junta's UEC dissolved parties for simply not registering in its newly enacted repressive 'political parties registration law' while two parties such as ANP and ZCD are

banned citing the different articles of the law, mainly as they are seen as sympathizers of the resistance forces in Rakhine and Chin states.

B. Junta's Preparations for Elections in Rakhine

As the allegations of widespread electoral fraud by the NLD appointed UEC during the 2020 general elections are the [key justifications](#) of the coup by Myanmar military on February 1, 2021, the newly formed body of State Administration Council (SAC) pretended to prepare for a fresh election as soon as possible. On its first official announcement on that day, the military promised new elections after a one-year [emergency](#). One week later on February 8, the SAC's first televised press conference reiterated that elections would be held after voter-list [verification](#).

After six months of the coup, the SAC chief Min Aung Hlaing gave a speech about the formation of the “caretaker government” and announced elections by [August 2023](#). Three months before, the newly appointed UEC also held a workshop with the participation of 59 political parties on May 21, 2021 and this event was joined by five political parties from Arakan. But, popular parties like ANP and Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) did not attend and other minor parties like Mro National Party (MNP), Arakan Front Party (AFP), Khami National Development Party (KNDP), Mro National Development Party (MNDP) and Rakhine State National Unity Party (RSNUP).

As of January 2022, five ethnic armed groups coordinating the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) including the Arakan-based Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) agreed to junta-organised elections in late [2023](#). Other members of the PPST which joined the talk included Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KPC/KNU/KNLA-PC), Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), and Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO). All these groups are considered as smaller and less representative groups of their respective ethnic nationalities, especially after the coup. Another two big and more representative PPST members are the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) and New Mon State Party (NMSP) did not attend the talk².

But this political stance reflected the post-coup divisive political landscape in Arakan politics. Regarding the announcement, U Thar Tun Hla, chairman of the ANP, said;

“People in Myanmar live in fear. If an election is to be held, it is very important that voters have physical and emotional security. It is critical that they can vote freely and safely. However, Myanmar does not have such an environment.”

PPST spokesperson Daw Saw Mra Razar Lin, however, claimed;

² Later RCSS reduced into ‘partial participation’ in the PPST while NMSP withdrew the group membership.

“Accepting the multi-party democracy system has nothing to do with accepting the upcoming election or not. We agreed to multi-party democracy, to establish a Union based on democracy and federalism, and to work for peace and development of the Union.”

Then, a short-armed clash between the Myanmar junta military and Arakan Army broke out between August and November 2022. Consequently, the conflict dynamics suddenly affected the party politics of the state. When the ANP released a statement condemning the Myanmar military for artillery attacks that resulted in civilian casualties and damage to dozens of houses urging the warring groups not to make use of residential areas either to take cover from or attack the other side on September 29, the party was summoned by the UEC [a week later](#) warning not to release one-side statement. News also reported that both ANP and AFP were not yet preparing for junta-run elections next year as they were skeptical about the [elections scenarios](#). By the end of 2022, the Rakhine branch of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was reported starting the preparation for proposed 2023 [elections](#). As of December 29, 2022, the same five members of the PPST released a statement of support for the junta planned [elections](#).

2023 also started with the news of junta preparation in Arakan for the coming poll. In early January, a population census of residents including Muslim community in Maungdaw began to be collected by the junta [authorities](#). Days later, this activity was implemented in the townships of Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Ponnagyun, Sittwe and Ann in collaboration with teams trained for elections preparation across [Arakan](#). As of January 11, the AFP leader claimed that the 2023 election offered a way out of the current national crisis, contrary to its statements [months ago](#).

When the junta enacted a new political parties registration law on [January 23](#), small ethnic political parties in Arakan viewed it as posing [“an existential threat.”](#) Quite surprisingly, a regime population census in townships across Arakan to facilitate the compiling of voter lists was announced to be 99.25 per cent completed, the junta-controlled Myanma Alin daily reported on [February 8](#). A few days later, an anti-military regime ALD official spoke out: ‘If we contest the junta’s election, we become a pillar for the perpetuation of [dictatorship](#).’

But, the spokesperson of the ULA in its February 17 press release said that the group will not help the junta elections citing³ “If the fighting in our Arakan region continues to be intense, and the people continue to face arrests and attacks, then that election won’t go smoothly. In that case, the election won’t be possible at all. As for us in the ULA/AA, we will follow the will of the [people](#).” But, news reported that a mainstream political party, ANP, was seeking to receive party members’ opinions on participating in junta’s proposed poll. A key leader and central committee member U Ba Shein said; *“The majority [of Ramree Township executive committee members] want to re-*

³ Note that this was the time of de facto humanitarian ceasefire in Arakan, and in the coming nine months, the AA will resume its attacks against Myanmar junta in Arakan as a part of famous ‘1027 Operation’.

register the party,”⁴ He would later lead the split for another political party called “Rakhine Nationalities Party (RNP).

By late March, Arakan-based political parties six in total like ANP, AFP, Khami National Development Party (KNDP), Rakhine State National Unity Party (RSUNP), Mro National Party (MNP), and Mro National Development Party (MNDP) were reported to register whereas another three parties such as ALD, Kaman National Development Party (KNDP), Mro National Democracy Party (MNDP) and Daingnet Nationalities Development Party (DNDP) decided not to register. According to the existing law, these four parties will be dissolved automatically if they did not register within 60 days of the registration window.⁵

Registered Parties	Non-Registered Parties
Arakan National Party (ANP) Arakan Front Party (AFP) Khami National Development Party (KNDP) Rakhine State National Unity Party (RSUNP) Mro National Party (MNP) Mro National Development Party (MNDP)	Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) Kaman National Development Party (KNDP) Daingnet Nationalities Development Party (DNDP) Mro National Democracy Party (MNDP)

The political landscape of Arakan will become more complex when All Arakan Students’ & Youths’ Congress (AASYC), a group mainly based along Thailand-Myanmar border and closed to another Rakhine armed outlet, Arakan National Council/Arakan Army (ANC/AA) said in early April, to launch a campaign calling for a boycott of the poll with the slogan of “sham election” and “free ourselves from the yoke of military rule.”

As of July, news regarding the results of party registration started to emerge. A small MNDP was approved on July 3, but it was reported that UEC in Arakan warned the political parties not to engage with armed groups during a July 11 meeting. The party representatives include AFP, RSNUP, MNP, KNDP and newly approved MNDP. Still, news by late August said that political parties in Arakan were struggling to comply with the junta's registration law as it requires local parties to have at least 1,000 members mobilized within 90 days after provisional registration, at least 10 million kyat (approximately US\$4,700 at the time) deposited in a state-owned bank (e.g., Myanma Economic Bank), with proof submitted and at least 5 party offices in five townships within their operational region/state (typically within 180 days of registration). By early September, news reported that during a meeting between the junta and five NCA signatories, they discussed holding elections and even amending the constitution. Weeks later, MNP was disbanded as they could not open offices in five townships in Arakan.

⁴ At that time, he had not yet established his new political party, Rakhine Nationalities Party (RNP), which asked for the admission of its founding on April 7, 2025 and received permission on August 4, 2025.

⁵ Starting from January 26, 2023.

While the news about the election politics were covering the newsfeed on the media, an unpredictable wave of armed clashes broke out across Arakan starting from November 13, 2023, as a part of famous ‘1027 Operation’. Consequently, in early 2024, local observers started to criticize the silence of the Rakhine political parties on junta atrocities in the [region](#). By July, amidst increasingly armed clashes in the region, the Community Party of China (CPC) invited four Myanmar political parties to China including AFP led by [Dr.Aye Maung](#). Weeks later, when the junta attempted to conduct a census in Arakan, a local journalist said;

"In Rakhine State only Gwa and Manaung remain under Junta's firm control. Conducting the population census in these two towns will not represent the entire Rakhine [State](#)."

By the end of August, the junta provided about two-week training on population census data collection to around 20 teachers in [Sittwe](#) followed by Kyaukphyu in early September. One month later, news reported that five junta-controlled towns such as Sittwe, Kyaukpyu, Taungup, Ann and Manaung began a census [program](#) amidst intensifying armed clashes. In the first week of December, 2024, the UEC announced to allow domestic and foreign monitoring organisations in the 2025 [elections](#).

Then, in the election year of 2025, news about the polls becomes more repetitive. By late March 2025, the chairman of the State Administration Council (military junta), Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, has stated that the election will be held in four phases within two months, specifically in the third and fourth weeks of December in 2025, and first and second weeks of January, [2026](#). In Arakan politics, as of June 9, RNP was allowed to participate in the poll. Then, as a sign of increasing tension, the ULA spokesperson on August 11, said that no elections will be held in its controlled [areas](#) meaning more than 80 percent of the region. Just ten days later, the UEC announced that only three townships such as Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and Manaung will have [elections](#). Amidst this crisis, the ANP spoke out and stated that even if the UEC rejected its registration, the party would still [exist](#).

On another front, Dr.Aye Maung, leader of the AFP was now granted pardon by the chief of the military junta on [September 11](#), just three months before the elections. The next day, the party announced that they will compete in all constituencies inside Rakhine with more than 60 [candidates](#). On September 14, the UEC made an unilateral bold announcement that four townships such as Ann, Taunggoke, Thandwe and Gwa in southern Arakan will have elections in the second phase of its planned [elections](#).

On nationwide extend, UEC [announced that](#) a total of 4963 candidates from 57 political parties will compete for all three types of parliamentary seats.

Table 1: National, regional political parties and independent candidates contesting in three parliaments

No.	Political Parties	Leaders	Pyithu Hluttaw	Amyothar Hluttaw	State/Region Hluttaws	Nationality Candidates	Total
1	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	U Khin Yi	265	156	569	28	1018
2	National Unity Party (NUP)	U Han Tun	182	111	387	14	694
3	People's Pioneer Party (PPP)	Dr Thet Thet Khine	193	145	320	14	672
4	Shan and Nationalities Democratic Party (White Tiger)	Sai Aike Pao	159	76	341	8	584
5	Pyithu Party (PP)	U Ko Ko Gyi	152	73	278	9	512
6	Myanmar Farmers Development Party	U Kyaw Swa Soe	125	55	243	5	428
7	51 Regional parties		203	213	525	19	960
8	Individuals		51	3	33	8	95

Source: UEC. Note: The UEC is still screening the eligibility of candidates, and the number can be reduced.

One month later on October 15, the UEC announced that the 60-day election campaigning period can begin from [October 28, 2025](#).

C. Law as A Tool of Control and Suppression

There are three prominent legal changes and tools used by the junta to an instrument of control and suppression regarding the 2025 elections. The first one is **the Political Parties Registration Law** (enacted January 26, 2023, as State Administration Council Law No. 15/2023), second, **Law on the Protection of Multiparty Democratic General Elections from Obstruction, Disruption, and Destruction** (enacted July 29, 2025, as State Administration Council Law No. 48/2025), and third, **Amendments to the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law, Amyotha Hluttaw Election Law, and Region/State Hluttaw Election Laws** (multiple amendments in 2023–2025, including sixth amendments in July 2025).

The first law on political parties forced all parties to re-register with stringent requirements (e.g., 100,000 members initially, later reduced to 50,000; large funds; offices in half the townships especially for nationwide parties). It banned convicted individuals and links to "unlawful" groups, leading to the dissolution of the NLD and 39 other other parties, effectively rigging party competition in favor of the military-backed USDP.

The second law commonly called the "Election Protection Law," criminalizes any criticism, protest, incitement, or "disruption" of the election process (including social media posts), with penalties from 3 years imprisonment to life or the death penalty. It has resulted in hundreds of

arrests for anti-election speech or boycotts. As of December 14, 2025, sources [reported](#) that at least 310 people have been charged and 47 arrested under this law.

Finally, the third one introduced the mixed-member proportional representation (PR) system (departing from pure First Pass The Post-FPTP), enabled electronic voting machines (EVMs), tightened candidate qualifications, and facilitated phased voting/cancellations in contested areas—measures criticized for fragmenting opposition votes and allowing manipulation. This part will discuss more about this part.

Traditionally, clauses in the existing 2008 constitution do not explicitly spell out "first-past-the-post" or detailed voting methods—those were defined in subsequent electoral laws. But, generally, the structure of one representative per township/constituency (Sections 109, 120, 141) inherently requires a majority/plurality (FPTP) system in single-member districts for all three kinds of parliaments, Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and State/Region parliaments.

Before, for Pyithu Hluttaw, only one MP represents one township regardless of population size, and thus, there are **17 MPs from Rakhine state**. Then, for Amyotha Hluttaw, the number of MPs is equally defined as **12 for all states/regions** no matter the size of its territory and population, and thus, there will be 12 MPs from Rakhine state for that legislative constituency. It also means that there will be 12 constituencies in Rakhine state defined by the UEC. For example, townships of **Thandwe and Gwa are defined as number 11** while **Taunggoke township alone is constituted as number 12**.

Sources claimed that the UEC divided boundaries of the constituencies mainly to balance population size (voters) among the constituencies, not necessarily the township's boundaries. Then, for state/region's parliamentary constituencies, it is defined based on the number of townships, as two MPs from each township are elected. For instance, for Sittwe township, there will be constituency 1 and 2 for Rakhine state's parliament of 34 MPs⁶. But, all MPs for all three types of parliaments are elected by only FPTP system.

But, in this 2025 elections, changes in electoral systems mainly took place for Amyotha Hluttaw and State/Region parliaments. For Amyotha Hluttaw, the number of seats like 12 will remain the same, but unlike 2020, constituencies will be divided between those for FPTP and those for Proportional Representation (PR). A similar pattern goes for Rakhine State's parliament as well. The number of seats like 34 for the State's parliament is fixed, but constituencies are divided by electoral systems of FPTP and PR.

The following table shows how UEC defined the boundaries of constituencies for Amyotha, Pyithu and State Hluttaws in Rakhine state on August 15, [2025](#).

⁶ In Rakhine state, there is still a constituency for 'Chin National Race Affairs Minister'.

Pyithu Hluttaw⁷	17 MPs	Amyotha Hluttaw	12 MPs
Under FPTP	1 MP In Each Constituency	Under FPTP	6 MPs (1 MP In Each Constituency)
	Maungdaw	Constituency-1	District of Taunggoke and Thandwe
	Buthidaung	Constituency-2	District of Kyaukphyu
	Rethadaung	Constituency-3	District of Sittwe
	Sittwe	Constituency-4	District of Maungdaw
	Ponnagyun	Constituency-5	District of Mrauk-U
	Pauktaw	Constituency-6	District of Ann
	Kyauktaw		
	Mrauk-U	Under PR	6 MPs (3 MPs In Each Constituency)
	Minbya	Constituency-1	District of Sittwe, Maungdaw and Mrauk-U
	Myebon	Constituency-2	District of Kyaukphyu, Taunggoke, Thandwe and Ann
	Ann		
	Kyaukphyu		
	Rambree		
	Taunggoke		
	Manaung		
	Thandwe		
	Gwa		

State Hluttaw⁸	2*17 = 34 MPs		
Under FPTP	17 MPs	Under PR	17 MPs
Constituency-1 to 17	Each MP for One Township	Constituency-1 (10 MPs)	Districts of Sittwe, Maungdaw, Mrauk-U
	Maungdaw		
	Buthidaung	Constituency-2 (7 MPs)	Districts of Kyaukphyu, Taunggoke, Thandwe, Ann
	Rethadaung	One Constituency for Chin National Race Affairs	All districts
	Sittwe		
	Ponnagyun		
	Pauktaw		
	Kyauktaw		
	Mrauk-U		
	Minbya		
	Myebon		

⁷ CAS team cannot provide specific constituencies for each township.

⁸ CAS team cannot provide specific constituencies for each township.

	Ann
	Kyaukphyu
	Rambree
	Taunggoke
	Manaung
	Thandwe
	Gwa

D. Rakhine National Race Affairs Minister in Yangon Region

Under the current 2008 constitution, national race affairs minister refers to positions at the Region or State level (not a Union-level minister). These ministers are elected to represent specific ethnic minority groups in Region/State governments and Hluttaws (parliaments). Specifically, Article 161(c) of Chapter IV: Legislature provides for the inclusion of representatives of ethnic nationalities ("national races") who are entitled to such seats.

The detailed qualification and election process for these ministers is outlined in Article 161 overall, with the threshold (ethnic groups comprising at least 0.1% of the national population and forming a minority in that Region/State) derived from related provisions and implementation. These ministers are directly elected (by voters of that specific ethnic group only) and serve in the Region/State cabinet, with limited portfolios related to ethnic affairs (e.g., culture, literature, and other related rights of their group).

Traditionally, since the 2010 general elections including 2015 and 2020, Rakhine ethnic residents forming more than 0.1% of the national population in Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy regions enjoyed the rights to elect their representatives. An UEC announcement in mid-October mentioned five candidates from USDP, SNDP, People's Pioneer Party (PPP), National Unity Party (NUP) and Myanmar Farmers Development Party ([MFDP](#)). But, in the 2025 elections, news about the elections for this position in Ayeyarwaddy region were largely silent. Therefore, events about the competition in the Yangon region have been focused.⁹

Records showed that the UEC has announced the list of seven candidates competing for the Minister of Rakhine national race affairs in Yangon Region on October 22, [2025](#). The list of the candidates are as follows;

No.	Name	Political Party	Key Focused Areas
1	U Nay Min Tun	USDP	Housing support for war-displaced Rakhine IDPs, internal travel and movement right, education and skills development for youths
2	U Tha Sein	Pyithu Party (PP)	Job opportunities for Rakhine migrant youths,

⁹ But, out of 45 townships in Yangon region, only 12 had elections in the first phase.

			freedom of movement, race, language and religion, health and livelihood development
3	Daw Aye Mar Lwin	People's Pioneer Party (PPP)	Vocational training for Rakhine youths, education for Rakhine community, culture and literature
4	U Tin Maung	SNDP	Freedom of movement for Rakhine people, job opportunities, ID cards
5	Daw Khin Hnin Si Aung	Peace Broker Party (PBP)	No available information
6	U Nyi Nyi	Independent Candidate	Youth and job opportunities, education for poor children, healthcare for women and children, culture, literature and religion, festivals
7	U Tin Htoo Aung	Independent Candidate	Daily livelihood struggles of Rakhine residents in Yangon, human trafficking, workplace injuries and labor rights issues, livelihood and survival needs of war-displaced persons (IDPs), need for government-to-government (G-to-G) solutions

Three days later on October 25, a news report reported that Yangon-based Rakhine ethnic people are more interested in the independent candidates among those contesting. One resident [said](#):

“Ko Tin Htoo Aung is already well-known. He also contested in the previous 2020 election, though he didn’t win. Now, in this election, Yangon’s Rakhine people are saying that if they absolutely have to vote, they will definitely vote for Ko Tin Htoo Aung. He’s a young person, and we see him consistently involved in social work. He’s not opportunistic—that’s why I’m planning to vote for him.”

But, on December 10, he was rejected by the UEC citing Section 10(j) of the election law which states that persons who are members of organizations declared as unlawful associations; persons associated with organizations designated as terrorist groups by the State; or persons with reliable connections to armed insurgent groups are not entitled to stand as candidates [in the election](#).

E. Positions of International Stakeholders on Elections

Records showed that stances of the international stakeholders on the elections are also divisive. The United Nations on December 23 stated the elections as a “sham” or “charade,” “atmosphere of fear, violence, repression,” and “not free, fair and [credible](#).” Then, the United States and almost all western democracies regarded it as “illegitimate, sham” and maintained the line of no recognition and [criticism](#). Russia, a strong alliance of Myanmar military, supported the polls viewing them as a step toward stability and democratic transition amid ongoing [civil war](#). ASEAN, as a regional entity, also expressed that it is “cautious” and “difficult to engage with inclusivity” while prioritizing peace and [dialogue](#).

Then, among Myanmar's neighbors, China is strongly supportive, endorsing the elections as a path to stability and governance predictability, and a major backer pushing for the process to [proceed](#). For India, it offered limited and pragmatic support, backed the process for regional stability and sent election [observers](#). Thailand, as an important ASEAN member and neighbor, its approaches are mostly pragmatic and cautious but planned to send observers and sees potential for "positive developments," while criticizing lack of inclusivity maintaining ASEAN re-engagement difficult without [dialogue](#). Laos, a less noticed neighbor, is more engagement-oriented and advocated dialogue with no strong criticism reported. Finally, Bangladesh showed no explicit strong position and focused only on Rohingya refugee issues while refusing to send election observers despite the [junta's request](#).

On the election day, records showed that teams from nine countries acted as election observers and it can be found in the following tables;

No.	Country	Delegate or Team
1	Russia	Central Election Commission, Team of State Duma
2	China	Special Envoy for Asian Affairs Deng Xijun, International Liaison Office, CPC
3	Cambodia	National Election Committee
4	Vietnam	International Liaison Office, Vietnam Communist Party (VCP)
5	India	Led former Army Commander Sahni Arun Kumar (not official state delegation)
6	Japan	Myanmar-Japan Association
7	Kazakhstan	Delegation led by Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission
8	Belarus	Central Election Commission
9	Nicaragua	Ambassador to Myanmar

Besides, as of December 27, sources also claimed that there are 215 journalists from 61 international media outlets to monitor and report the [elections](#).

Part III - During the Elections

A. Election Campaign Period Began

Election campaign period started on October 28, and ended on the election day, December 28, 2025. Beginning on that day, election campaign news started to spread across the media sphere. In early November, RNP chair U Ba Shein, as a part of its campaign activities, pledged renovation of Manaung Airport and solar plant in the island to provide [electricity](#). This news was also followed by the Rakhine-based USDP campaign news when its officials invited over 100 IDPs in Sittwe to party office for vote solicitation and promising help with [repatriation](#). In early December, it was reported that Dr. Aye Maung, chair of AFP, Campaigning in Sittwe, promised more support for IDPs to return home If he won the [elections](#). As of December 9, media reported that both local Rakhine and Muslims in Sittwe were paid K10,000 each to attend USDP [campaign events](#).

A Sittwe resident said;

“The USDP is more active than other political parties. The USDP mainly targets those who are struggling to make ends meet and come in cars. After campaigning in front of the Arakan State government office, they give each person K10,000. Since they are struggling to make ends meet, they follow them because they want money,”

This news is also confirmed by the interview conducted by the CAS team which interviewed about the Rohingya situations. He said;

“The USDP appointed some influential Rohingya individuals as campaign mobilizers. These representatives organised the community and distributed party T-shirts and hats. During these campaign meetings with the Rohingya, the USDP discussed with the Rohingya people regarding their needs and even conducted a campaign event involving primary-school students.”

The interview also reported that locals saw posters just from two parties, AFP and USDP. I do not think anyone stopped any parties from putting up posters; it was just the decision of the parties.

For Kyaukphyu, the CAS team interview reported that USDP was more powerful than other Rakhine political parties. A local said;

“What I've seen is that three parties (USDP, RNP, AFP) are campaigning, and they do it ward by ward. For example, today it's Saedi Taung ward, today it's the Asoeya ward—they take turns rotating among the three parties, each on their own day.

One notable difference is that the AFP doesn't hold public speeches or rallies for campaigning. They only distribute handbills/leaflets. They don't gather people to give speeches or actively campaign about the party.”

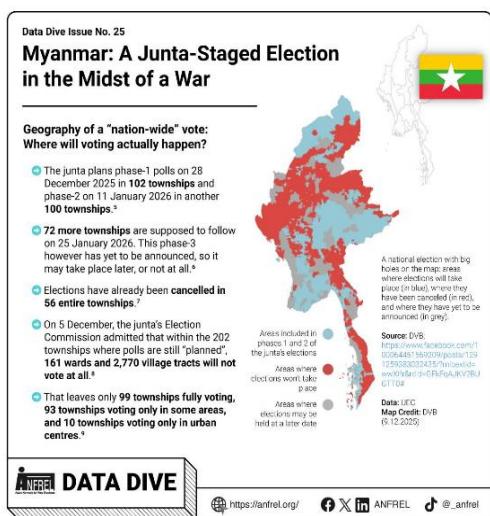
He added that 'Chin national race affairs' candidates from both USDP and RNP came in person and conducted speeches and campaigning rallies in Kyaukphyu.

Security situations just before the elections are also issues to be concerned about. An interviewee from Kyaukphyu told the CAS that there is security here. Everyone is in a safe and secure situation. The clashes between the two sides only happen in places quite far from the town. The military is also using full force to prevent [the Arakan Army] from approaching the town—in local terms, it's like "shoot and destroy anything that moves" on the side facing the town. Inside the town, public speeches and campaigning are possible, markets are open as usual, schools are open normally.

In Sittwe, just days before the election, the military forces were deployed near the voting station for security. And the day before the election, the Military, police and especially the Military Intelligence Department interrogated the people at the checkpoints. They asked normal questions, such as where we are going, why we are going, etc. And if they suspect someone, they stop the person and check the motorcycle.

But, on another front, just weeks before the upcoming elections, civilians in the ULA/AA controlled areas told to the local [media](#):

"That place isn't safe either. This place isn't safe either. The children are scared too. Whenever the airplane makes a 'whoosh' sound, everyone starts crying and running away."

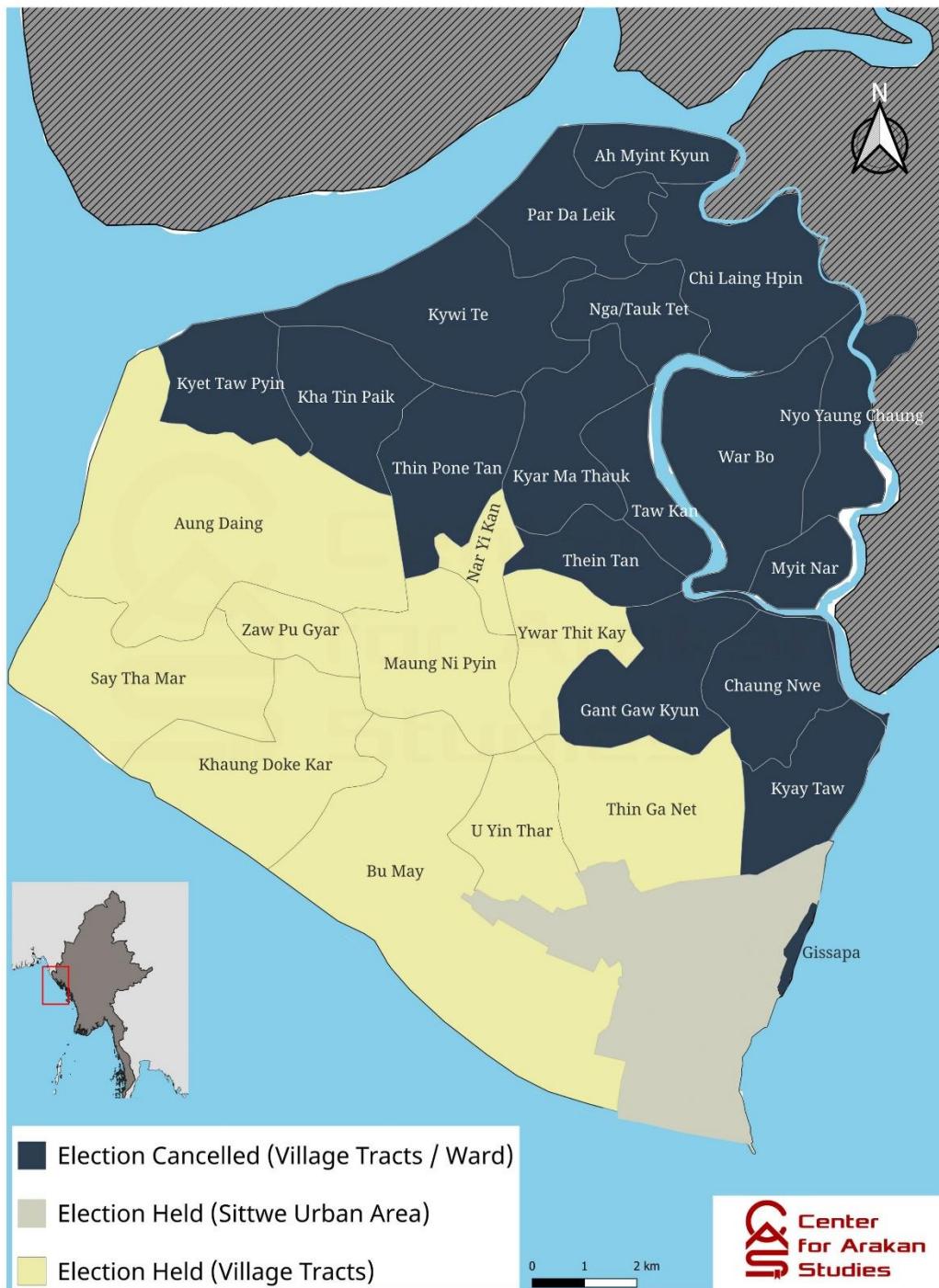


For nationwide situations, it could be clearly seen in the above map released by ANFREL on December 19, [2025](#). But, another pro-military media source on December 27 stated that 30.91 percent (102 townships) of the total township will have elections in the first phase on December 28, followed by 30.30 percent (100 townships) on January 11 as the second phase and followed by 19.09 percent (63 townships) on January 25 as the [third phase](#).

For the situations in Arakan, the CAS team has created maps for Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and Manaung based on the data released by junta on [December 5](#). According to the

maps, there are 71 wards and village-tract groups¹⁰ in Sittwe and Kyaukphyu township where no election would be held.

Coverage of 2025 General Election in Sittwe Township



¹⁰ 18 village-tract groups including one ward in Sittwe and 53 village-tract groups including some wards in urban Sane town in Kyaukphyu

Coverage of 2025 General Election in Kyauk Phyu Township



Coverage of 2025 General Election in Munaung Township



But, for Arakan, there will be no elections in the second and third phases¹¹ as all the rest townships are currently now under the control of the ULA/AA and junta UEC confirmed it on [December 25](#). On the night of December 27, the UEC again rushed to announce that there will be no elections in 20 constituencies including 8 from the same four southern townships of [Arakan](#).

B. On Election Day

Election day started at 6 AM and ended at 4 PM on December 28, 2025. Various sources reported the news related to the elections. A local from downtown Yangon said to the Strait Times, an international [media outlet](#):

“I don’t support the military. I just came out here because I don’t want to have problems with the military at the airport.”

In the case of Arakan’s constituencies, sources [reported](#) at 10:20 AM that Dr. Aye Maung's AFP and the military-backed USDP are leading in votes in Sittwe. For Manaung township, the same media at around 12 PM stated that AFP was leading in votes, while in second place, the USDP was also gaining a significant share of [votes](#). A voter from Sittwe spoke out to the media that locals are voting mainly to avoid the consequences of not showing up in the [voting stations](#).

On another front, it was reported at 1 PM that in both Sittwe and Kyaukphyu, the junta forces conducted artillery shells toward the AA-controlled areas in the morning of [the election day](#). A resident of Sittwe said that that morning, on the day the election was being held in Sittwe, they heard four heavy artillery shots.

“It sounded like it came from the direction of Kyae Taw village or Shwe Min Gan (under junta control). It could also be from the police battalion side.”

Another Sittwe resident said that since yesterday (December 27) evening until today, security has been heavily increased at every street corner and intersection in Sittwe.

“Since this morning in Sittwe town, some people have gone to vote. But I haven’t seen a large number yet. Soldiers and police are stationed at road junctions and intersections, with heightened security.”

In Kyaukphyu town, the election began around 7:00 AM, and a female resident of Kyaukphyu said that morning that she saw people voting one or two at a time at polling stations set up in ward schools.

¹¹ On September 14, UEC announced that there will be elections in four townships of southern Arakan such as Ann, Taunggoke, Thandwe and Gwa in the second phase. But it was withdrawn by the December 25 announcement.

“In Kyaukphyu, yesterday evening around 4 PM, they fired from the navy ships at Ngapali Chaung mouth. This morning, they fired twice more—towards Thaing Chaung, Minbyin, and Pyar Tal directions. In the town itself, the election is ongoing. Polling stations are set up at the high school, post-primary school, and town school. Not many people are there. Just one or two come and vote.”

At around 4 PM, media [reported that](#) in Sittwe, voters who cast their ballots in person said that some polling stations experienced technical failures with the voting machines.

The machine malfunctions occurred at the polling station in Kyaung-Tat-Lan Ward and the polling station in Mawleiki Ward. According to reports, when voters pressed the button to cast their vote, the receipt printed by the machine confirming the vote did not display the full page — only half of it appeared.

Interviews conducted by the CAS team on the election days also uncovered some update situations in both Sittwe and Kyaukphyu towns. Rohingya observer reported;

“The queue was very long, we were around number 500, and we had to wait more than 2 hours. And I saw the people with the number 2,000. I am not sure how long it takes for them. Some people have to wait for around 4 hours.”

During the election, Dr Aye Maung visited the Thay Chaung Post Primary School, where the Rohingya community was casting their ballots. He was there for around 15 minutes. It was observed that the political parties were not allowed to go inside the polling station, he added. They reported that Muslims were able to vote in both towns.

Unlike Rohingya observer from Sittwe, Rakhine observer from Kyaukphyu said;

“There's no situation of having to wait in line. The reason is partly because there's low interest in the election, and partly because the town has a small population. Depending on those two factors, in Kyaukphyu, when voting, there's no need to queue up. You arrive and vote right away. People voting for ethnic nationalities get four votes. Rakhine ethnic people get three votes. That's how it is.”

This situation is also confirmed by a media report at around 1 PM that due to very low voter turnout at the election, party representatives especially from AFP went around the wards and forcibly dragged local residents to the polling stations in the town, [a female resident told](#).



U Ba Shein, chief of RNP during a television speech for election campaign (source-Narinjara)

C. After Elections

Election observers for the CAS also reported the post-election fresh situations, especially on the security context in these two towns. Unlike the previous elections, the Rohingya observer reported that the people are not talking about the election and the result. The Rohingya people are busy with the WFP population verification process. The security was also tightened after the voting ended and the public was not allowed to see the counting, he continued.

A Rakhine observer from Kyaukphyu reported a slightly different context. When asked, he replied:

“People say things like that, yeah. Regarding the election, which party did you vote for? I've heard people talking like this too. There aren't any cases of parties badmouthing or attacking each other. As for today, I haven't heard anything about threats or anything like that against people who don't vote.”

On December 30, media reported that sources close to the junta-controlled Union Election Commission (UEC) said that more than half of the eligible voters in the three townships of Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung in Rakhine State participated in voting during the election held by the military council. On December 31, the junta spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun claimed that "52.13 percent voted. A successful election is a victory for [the people](#)."

But, updates about the election results and controversies continued. In the constituency of ‘Rakhine National Race Affairs Minister’, media reported that Nay Min Tun from the USDP was elected. However, an election observer from another competing candidate said that there were voting irregularities during the poll. He explained;

“When Rakhine voters went to cast the Rakhine, ethnic nationalities vote after voting for upper, lower and region’s parliaments, authorities in the polling station said it’s done, it’s done—come on, come on by preventing them from casting the ethnic nationalities vote.”

According to the UEC’s statements on January 5, and 6, respectively, the election results for Rakhine state are as the followings:

For Amyotha Hluttaw, there are a total of 12 MPs, but for 6 MPs under FPTP, 2 are occupied by USDP and 1 by AFP. Then, under PR, out of 6 MPs, 3 elected for USDP, 2 AFP and 1 RNP. For Pyithu Hluttaw, out of 17 MPs, only three townships were hold elections in which USDP won for Sittwe and Kyaukphyu while RNP occupied seat for Manaung.

For State Hluttaw, out of 34, there are 17 MPs under FPTC but elections were hold in only three townships in which USDP occupied Sittwe and Kyaukphyu while AFP won for Manaung. Then, for another 17 MPs under PR, USDP gained 9 seats, while AFP and RNP occupied 4 seats for each. Seat for Chin National Race Affair Constituency is occupied by USDP as well. The specific list of the information could be seen in the Appendix A.

Part IV- Conclusion

The 2025 elections, both nationwide and in Arakan, did not function as mechanisms of political representation but as instruments of authoritarian consolidation under conditions of active conflict. Nationally, the junta engineered the electoral environment through legal exclusion like party registration law, party bans, manipulated electoral systems, and coercive security measures, ensuring predictable outcomes rather than competitive choice. In Arakan, these dynamics were intensified by territorial fragmentation and continuous armed conflict. Electoral participation was confined to a small number of junta-controlled townships, while the majority of the region under ULA/AA influence was excluded entirely. Even where polling occurred, based on the voices of the local participants, voter participation was shaped by fear, coercion, and survival considerations rather than political preference, where in some circumstances, voters were even forced to vote to exact party. As a result, the elections were largely performative, aimed at signaling control and constitutional continuity rather than reflecting the public will.

Experts highlight that the 2025 elections were primarily a military attempt to gain international legitimacy, receiving support from China and Russia but condemnation from much of the global community as a sham. For Arakan, this electoral design has serious implications: amid severe human rights violations, including airstrikes on Mrauk-U public hospital, the elections served only as a performative exercise, further eroding trust in formal political institutions and increasing public resentment toward the military. They demonstrate that participation under junta rule cannot provide meaningful representation, autonomy, or protection, while the junta's simultaneous election activities and violent operations reinforced oppression and targeted reprisals against civilians.

At the societal level, for many residents, the experience reinforced long-standing perceptions that electoral politics imposed from Naypyitaw serve central authority rather than local communities. Additionally, the exclusion of conflict-affected areas and the use of coercion completely deepened political alienation, particularly among Arakan populations already living under insecurity, displacement, and economic hardship. Instead of reducing fear or fostering political inclusion, the elections compounded more fear, and reinforced a climate of intimidation. This dynamic sustains public disengagement from formal politics and normalizes the perception that elections are irrelevant to everyday survival. Consequently, reliance on parallel governance structures particularly those associated with the ULA/AA has been reinforced, as these structures are increasingly viewed as more capable of providing order, dispute resolution, and local accountability than junta-controlled institutions.

Politically, the 2025 elections are unlikely to weaken armed politics in Arakan; instead, they may further entrench them. By failing to integrate local voices and excluding large segments of the population, the elections indirectly legitimize alternative forms of governance and authority. Rather than resolving conflict or building pathways toward political compromise, the electoral process highlighted the structural limits of elections conducted under authoritarian rule and active warfare. In this sense, the Arakan case reflects broader patterns observed in conflict-affected states like Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, where elections function as symbolic exercises of power that preserve existing hierarchies rather than transform them. To wrap up, the 2025 elections in Arakan reinforced political exclusion and parallel authority rather than enabling genuine political inclusion or change.

Appendix A: Table of Political Parties Achieved Seats in The First Phase of Elections in Rakhine State

Amyotha Hluttaw	12 MPs	
Under FPTP	6 MPs (1 MP in Each Constituency)	Winning Candidates and Parties
Constituency-1	District of Taunggoke and Thandwe	
Constituency-2	District of Kyaukphyu	
Constituency-3	District of Sittwe	
Constituency-4	District of Maungdaw	
Constituency-5	District of Mrauk-U	
Constituency-6	District of Ann	
	Three winning candidates were announced, 2 USPDs and 1 AFP, but has not mentioned name of constituencies. As a conclusion, these three MPs will likely represent the districts of Kyaukphyu, Sittwe and Taunggoke and Thandwe.	
Under PR	6 MPs (3 MPs for Each Constituency)	
Constituency-1	District of Sittwe, Maungdaw and Mrauk-U	2 USDPs, 1 AFP
Constituency-2	District of Kyaukphyu, Taunggoke, Thandwe and Ann	1 USDP, 1 AFP, 1 RNP

Pyithu Hluttaw	17 MPs	
Under FPTP	1 MP in Each Constituency	Winning Candidates and Parties
Constituency-1	Maungdaw	
Constituency-2	Buthidaung	
Constituency-3	Rathedaung	
Constituency-4	Sittwe	USDP
Constituency-5	Ponnagyun	
Constituency-6	Pauktaw	
Constituency-7	Kyauktaw	
Constituency-8	Mrauk-U	

Constituency-9	Minbya	
Constituency-10	Myebon	
Constituency-11	Ann	
Constituency-12	Kyaukphyu	USDP
Constituency-13	Rambree	
Constituency-14	Taunggoke	
Constituency-15	Manaung	RNP
Constituency-16	Thandwe	
Constituency-17	Gwa	

State Hluttaw	2*17=34 MPs	
Under FPTP	17 MPs	
Constituency-1 to 17	Each MP for One Township	Winning Candidates and Parties
Constituency-1	Maungdaw	
Constituency-2	Buthidaung	
Constituency-3	Rathedaung	
Constituency-4	Sittwe	USDP
Constituency-5	Ponnagyun	
Constituency-6	Pauktaw	
Constituency-7	Kyauktaw	
Constituency-8	Mrauk-U	
Constituency-9	Minbya	
Constituency-10	Myebon	
Constituency-11	Ann	
Constituency-12	Kyaukphyu	USDP
Constituency-13	Rambree	
Constituency-14	Taunggoke	
Constituency-15	Manaung	AFP
Constituency-16	Thandwe	
Constituency-17	Gwa	
Under PR	17 MPs	
Constituency-1 (10 MPs)	District of Sittwe, Maungdaw and Mrauk-U	
	Maungdaw	RNP
	Buthidaung	AFP
	Rathedaung	RNP
	Sittwe	USDP
	Ponnagyun	AFP
	Pauktaw	USDP
	Kyauktaw	USDP
	Mrauk-U	USDP
	Minbya	USDP

	Myebon	USDP
Constituency-2 (7 MPs)	District of Kyaukphyu, Taunggoke, Thandwe and Ann	
	Ann	USDP
	Kyaukphyu	AFP
	Rambree	USDP
	Taunggoke	RNP
	Manaung	RNP
	Thandwe	USDP
	Gwa	AFP
Chin National Race Affair Constituency	All townships	USDP