

Monthly Arakan Review

Center for Arakan Studies

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December in Arakan: Shifting Battlefields and Rising Challenges.

Monitoring of a brief situation of political tension, economic issues, social issues, and humanitarian issues in Arakan in December 2024.



Key Remarks

- The battlefields in Arakan are now moving into the southern parts of today's Rakhine State, the southern tail areas of Arakan Roma, and other conjunction areas with Magway, Pago, and Ayeyarwaddy regions. Thus, civilians in these areas are now facing various challenges and restrictions resulting from the armed conflicts. On another front, the junta jet fighters continue to launch airstrikes against civilian locations in central and northern Arakan. However, civilians in these areas are relatively safe. The AA announced a preference for a political solution over a military one.
- Economic developments in Arakan centered on agriculture, trade, and policy changes. Farmers suffered losses due to decreased paddy yields and restricted fertilizer imports, while local experts promoted SAP fertilizer manufacturing despite machinery challenges. The AA banned imported alcoholic beverages to boost the local economy and reduce funding to the junta, confiscating banned alcohol shortly thereafter. Arakan's control over Chinese projects highlighted trade dynamics, as the AA also expressed openness to foreign investment.
- Social hardships in Arakan persisted in December, with numerous challenges reported. Muslim IDPs in Myebon faced skin diseases, while Rakhine IDPs in Ayeyarwady were barred from fishing. Junta forces detained and killed two Arakanese women in Muse and looted unoccupied homes in Sittwe. Health crises worsened, with ART shortages leading to HIV-related deaths, malaria fatalities rising in Ponnagyun, and children suffering from skin diseases in Thandwe. Meanwhile, cannabis use increased among youth, and IDPs in Ann experienced outbreaks of diarrhea, dysentery, and dengue fever.
- Humanitarian challenges in Arakan intensified in December, marked by increasing displacement and urgent aid needs. Fierce combat in Gwa Township escalated the number of IDPs, with displaced families urgently requiring food, clothing, and medicine. Junta forces evicted entire villages, targeted healthcare facilities, and subjected fleeing women to sexual violence at checkpoints. IDPs faced livelihood hardships, land lease losses, and forced relocations, while over 600,000 people remained displaced, many enduring severe mental and physical distress. In response, the AA provided mental health support, but critical needs for food and shelter persisted across the region.

Political Affairs

On December 1, the junta airstrikes set school buildings ablaze in Nyaung Chaung village in Gwa after its troops' withdrawal. Then, they also dispatched reinforcements, including tanks, to Gwa.

On December 4, the junta examined families of 10 missing officers deployed from Pathein and Danubyu Battalions after communication was lost in the Ann battle. In the next day, the junta vehicles were attacked by PRA-Magway on Ann-Padan Road, and 9 soldiers killed. On December 10, the junta enhanced security and defense measures in Kyaukphyu, site of significant Chinese projects. On the same day, more than 300 Junta soldiers surrendered to AA amid Ann conflict.

On December 16, the junta military chief called for greater air campaign effectiveness. On the same day, it is reported that the full capture of Western Command in Ann was delayed as junta officers resisted. Four days later on December 24, the junta airstrikes on Thandwe resulted in the injuries of three individuals and the damage to several houses. It was followed by the curfew from 6 PM to 6 AM in some Ayeyarwady townships due to the Arakan conflict. On December 21, the AA said that it had seized two-thirds of Gwa Town. Three days later, the junta reinforced Gwa in wake of Western Command's fall. Then, on December 27, the junta fortified positions on Ann-Minbu Road. On the same day, the regime deployed more warships around Sittwe. Then, it was followed by the AA launches attacks on Kyauk Tan checkpoint in Sittwe the next day.

Then, December 30, the tensions rose between No (32) Police Battalion and AA in Kyaukphyu, center of Chinese Projects. On the same day, Arakanese youths among dozens were arrested by the regime in Yangon. Then, on December 31, the junta-allied organizations issued a statement opposing AA's control over much of Arakan State. On the same day, the 6-Mile Sayadaw in Maungdaw town was arrested for sharing information with Brig Gen Thurein Tun through video call. Then, the junta airstrikes on Yoe Ta Yote Village, Ponnagyun, also resulted in the deaths of 5 civilians, including 2 women and a boy, and injured 8 more.

In the case of AA's activities, on December 6, the group seized almost 30 battalions and units, excluding Western Command, in Ann. Two days later, the group declared the complete capture of NaKhaKha-5 in Maungdaw. Then, on December 15, the AA claimed full control of Taunggoke. Then, on December 19, the AA and junta reinforced positions on the Sittwe-Ponnagyun border. On the next day, the AA seized one of two junta battalions in Gwa. Then, on December 29, the group said that they are always ready to resolve conflicts via political means. Then, on December 30, the AA flagged its party and army flag at the southernmost areas in Rakhine state.

Economic Situations

The economic news in Arakan was mainly dominated by agricultural issues, high demand for some commodities, foreign direct investment (FDI), trade and migration, etc.

On December 10, it was reported that Bangladesh will import 3.92 lakh tons of rice, but the source of import was not yet certain. Two days later, local experts in Arakan guided SAP fertilizer manufacturing as imports from mainland Burma remained [restricted](#).

"We are utilizing and fixing old machines, but when they malfunction, we are unable to meet orders. New machinery is limited in Arakan State, and spare parts are costly," stated a producer of SAP compound fertilizer.

On that day, it was mentioned that there was a decline in rice purchase in Rakhine state. On December 19, it [was mentioned](#) that farmers faced financial losses due to decline in paddy yields.

"Last year's per acre yield was from 100 to 160 baskets of paddy, but this year's per acre yield is only 80 to 100 baskets of paddy. This year, farmers are unable to apply fertilizer to their paddy fields and are also suffering from the effects of the weather. Farmers are facing difficulties in farming and are not getting enough paddy, so they are facing losses," U San Lin, a local farmer from Khamaungtaw Village in Kyauktaw township.

On December 20, the AA [banned import and sale of outside](#) alcoholic beverages, allowing only local alcohol in Arakan.

"The main point is that by using locally produced alcohol, local producers will be benefited. Additionally, money that would have gone out of our region will stay here. More importantly it won't go to fund the terrorist military regime," said an educated young man.

Two days later, locally grown flowers are said to sell well in Arakan. Then, on December 27, it was reported that the AA confiscated alcoholic beverages after a ban on sale, consumption. According to the Institute of Strategy and Policy-Myanmar, the AA controlled 10 of 11 Chinese projects in Arakan. At the same time, the AA also welcomes foreign investment in the State.

Social Issues

The social difficulties in Arakan still continued in many ways.

On December 2, it was reported that the Muslim IDPs in Myebone still suffered from skin disease. One day later, the SAC [restricted](#) the Rakhine IDPs in Ayeyarwaddy region from accessing fishing livelihood.

A Rakhine IDP from Gwa said, "It has been more than 10 days that we were banned from fishing here. The police and special branch (SB) banned us. Only Rakhine IDPs were restricted but the locals were allowed."

Then, on December 7, it was reported that two Arakanese women were detained and killed in Muse by the junta forces on account of having links with the AA. In Kyauktaw, three days later, it was reported that the HIV-positive individuals [were dead](#) in Kyauktaw due to ART shortage.

"The medicine shortage lasted for a long time. It began during the fighting, and we couldn't buy the ART. His health worsened without the proper medication. We searched for medicine in Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, and Minbya towns, but failed to get it. He even tried alternative treatments, but it didn't help. Finally, he ran out of medicine and died," said a family member.

Then, in Thandwe, around 400 children also suffered from skin diseases. On December 18, the junta soldiers [were accused of burgling](#) uninhabited homes in Sittwe.

"Junta soldiers burgled unoccupied homes in some wards in Sittwe. Junta soldiers conducted security checks on residents and took photos," said a local man in Sittwe.

And, on December 24, the malaria cases and related fatalities rose in remote Ponnagyun township.

One day later, it was mentioned that cannabis use rose among young people in Arakan State. On December 25, the displaced individuals in Ponnagyun township, including kids, suffered from skin diseases. One day later, some displaced individuals in Ann township experienced diarrhea, dysentery, and dengue fever.

On December 28, it was reported that the junta troops detained three Arakanese young men in Nyaungdon township, Ayeyarwady Region. On the same day, air tickets were reported in high demand in Sittwe as fighting was feared imminent.

Humanitarian Issues

News related to the humanitarian sector in Arakan include the displacement of civilian population, forced relocation and the requirement of humanitarian assistance, etc.

Due to the intense combat in Gwa Township on December 5, 2024, the number of IDP figures was increased and urgent demand for aid [was reported](#).

A woman who was displaced expressed, "The requirements are immense. The combat is fierce, and the junta forces are conducting airstrikes on villages, leading to a rise in the daily count of IDPs. They do not steer clear of locations where IDPs are present, so we need to operate covertly. At this moment, we critically require warm clothes and blankets, yet rice is the top priority. We can cook porridge using rice. We also need medicine."

Then, the junta forces evicted the entire Yae Chan Pyin village under Sittwe township. Besides, it was reported that numerous Arakanese women escaping to mainland encounter sexual violence at military junta checkpoints. On December 15, 11/NRC holders of Arakanese [were prohibited](#) from living in Ngwe Thaung Yan, in Ayeyarwaddy region, the local reports said.

"It has become a routine of the regime to target civilian healthcare facilities as it can't win the war. The attacks on healthcare facilities not only harm healthcare workers but also civilians," said a health worker from Arakan State.

Then, on December 16, the IDPs in Kyauktaw faced losing land lease arrangement. Besides, the WFP-labeled food bags discovered in camps utilized by Border Guard Troops. Two days later, Arakan IDPs in Ayeyarwady's Chaungtha were forced out. On December 21, it was said that hundreds of IDPs in remote Ponnagyun Township village faced livelihood hardships. Then, on December 24, the villagers along Sittwe-Ponnagyun border fled junta artillery attacks. On the same day, the regime detained 16 Gwa residents sheltering in Ayeyarwady Region.

On December 26, it was mentioned that the junta forces evicted villagers from Pyar Lel Chaung in Sittwe and demolished and sold houses. Two days later, thousands of IDPs in Kyaukphyu township were reported to be in need of emergency aid. Four days later, over 600,000 people were displaced by ongoing conflict in Arakan, with the majority suffering mental and physical distress.

On December 30, it was reported that the AA provided mental health support for displaced civilians and the Muslims also fled as fighting verges on Arakan State capital. Besides, on December 31, the Arakan IDPs in Ayeyarwady Region were forced to pay accommodation fees. On the same day, the residents moved from outskirts villages to Sittwe faced difficulty in securing regular meals.

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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