

Monthly Arakan Review

CENTER FOR ARAKAN STUDIES

N0.38. December. 2025

Displacement, Air Strikes and Civilian Suffering in Arakan

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



Photo Credit to Western News (Mrauk-U Public Hospital After Ruthless Junta Air Strikes on December 12, 2025)

Executive Summary

December 2025 saw continued intense conflict in Arakan, with the Arakan Army (AA) achieving substantial military advances against the Myanmar junta across multiple fronts, including heavy casualties inflicted on regime forces and the downing of suicide drones. The junta's most condemned action was the 12 December airstrike on Mrauk-U Hospital, which triggered widespread international outrage from the UN, ASEAN, and Bangladesh. Amid escalating violence, the regime pushed forward a widely criticized "sham" election in only three contested townships (Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Manaung), characterized by low turnout, exclusion of AA-controlled areas, and victories for junta-aligned parties, further undermining its legitimacy with no prospect of de-escalation.

Ongoing junta blockades and regional instability severely strained Arakan's economy throughout December. Agriculture suffered from low paddy prices, exploitative trading, harvest interruptions due to fighting, seed shortages, and weather-related crop losses, while poultry farmers faced supply disruptions. Sea trade routes were repeatedly disrupted as Bangladeshi authorities seized numerous boats smuggling essential goods (cement, fertilizers, fuel, medicines) destined for AA areas. Rising commodity and gold prices exacerbated civilian hardship, compounded by reports of inconsistent enforcement of AA bans on junta-linked products, deepening economic and humanitarian strain.

Healthcare and social conditions deteriorated markedly, with widespread skin disease outbreaks affecting displaced persons and residents across at least seven townships, alongside medicine shortages in volunteer clinics and urgent needs for Mrauk-U Hospital bombing victims. The AA demonstrated proactive social governance by administering a second round of free vaccinations for young children and issuing migratory bird conservation rules. Cultural resilience persisted through observances of International Human Rights Day and widespread Christmas celebrations in multiple AA-controlled townships, where AA forces distributed gifts and greetings, helping maintain community morale amid hardship.

The month recorded grave humanitarian violations, with junta airstrikes, drone attacks, and shelling killing at least 53 civilians and injuring 108 in December alone, including the devastating Mrauk-U Hospital bombing (33 deaths) and year-end strikes in Thandwe (9 deaths, including children). Over 7,000 IDPs faced acute food and water shortages, while shelling triggered further displacement and drying water sources heightened vulnerability. Arbitrary arrests of Rakhine displaced persons continued, alongside injuries from unexploded ordnance and landmines; however, strong philanthropic responses delivered hundreds of millions of kyats in aid to bombing victims, underscoring community resilience against systematic junta attacks documented by local rights groups.

Key Developments

A. Politics: Three Key Highlights

1. 12-Dec-25: Junta airstrike on Mrauk-U Hospital

The Myanmar military (State Security and Peace Commission) bombed Mrauk-U Hospital, [killing dozens and injuring many](#). This incident drew widespread international and local condemnation, including from the UN, ASEAN, Bangladesh, victims' families (calling for sanctions), and various organizations. The junta spread misinformation, while the UN investigative body sought witness information. AA appealed for aid to victims.

2. Mid-to-late December 2025: Escalating clashes and junta airstrikes across Rakhine State

Intense fighting intensified in multiple areas (Kyaukphyu, Ann-Padan Road, Gwa, Ponnagyun, Pauktaw, Thandwe, Magway/Bago/Ayeyarwady regions), with AA inflicting heavy casualties on junta forces, seizing positions, capturing/defecting soldiers, and shooting down suicide drones (e.g., on [25-Dec-25](#)). Junta responded with repeated airstrikes on civilian areas, villages, monasteries, schools, and houses (e.g., on [22-Dec-25](#) in Gwa, on [31-Dec-25](#) in Thandwe, causing fires).

3. 28-Dec-25 to 31-Dec-25: Junta-organized "sham" election in parts of Rakhine

Elections proceeded amid heavy fighting and bombardment in three townships (Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Manaung), with [low turnout](#) (e.g., pickup trucks used to bring voters in Kyaukphyu; only half participated overall). USDP and Dr. Aye Maung's party claimed wins (partly via Muslim and junta's staff votes), while AFP candidates lost. Many areas (15 AA-controlled townships + 4 more) were excluded; protests occurred in Japan, and the UN urged international rejection.

General Overview

In December 2025, fierce fighting persisted in Myanmar's Rakhine State between the Arakan Army (AA/ULA) and the military junta, with AA securing significant battlefield gains by seizing outposts, inflicting heavy casualties, capturing equipment, and prompting defections across multiple fronts including Kyaukphyu and bordering regions, while continuing governance efforts through infrastructure projects and cultural initiatives in controlled areas. The junta responded aggressively with widespread airstrikes on civilian targets—most notoriously bombing Mrauk-U Hospital on 12 December, killing dozens and drawing strong international condemnation from the UN, ASEAN, Bangladesh, and others alongside fortifications and reinforcements. Amid ongoing clashes and bombardment, the junta conducted a controversial election in three contested townships (Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Manaung) marked by low turnout, exclusions of AA-held territories, and results favoring its allied parties amid fraud accusations. Cross-border tensions with ARSA militants and Bangladeshi forces added complexity, while civilians endured humanitarian crises, travel restrictions, and fears that underscored deepening criticism of the junta's actions with no signs of de-escalation.

B. Economic Fall down: Three Key Highlights

1. Throughout December 2025: Repeated seizures by Bangladeshi authorities of boats smuggling goods to Rakhine

Bangladesh Navy/Coast Guard detained multiple boats carrying cement (e.g., 1,500–1,750 bags on [7-Dec](#), 8-Dec, [17-Dec](#), 18-Dec), fertilizers, medicines, diesel, and even military gear, along with dozens of people (up to 30 per incident). These were en routes to AA-controlled areas in Arakan, highlighting tightened border controls amid the junta's blockade.

2. Mid-to-late December 2025: Severe economic hardships in agriculture and markets

Farmers faced low paddy prices, exploitative traders, inability to harvest due to [fighting in Kyaukphyu](#) (8-Dec), seed shortages reducing groundnut acreage (22-Dec), and crop damage from unseasonal rains affecting watermelons (24-Dec). Poultry farming was hit by blockades (10-Dec), while commodity prices [skyrocketed](#) in Sittwe (17-Dec) and gold reached record highs of ~93 lakh kyats per tical in AA areas (24-Dec).

3. 1-Dec-25: Alleged violation of AA's central ban on junta-produced alcohol

Reports claimed that despite a central-level prohibition on importing/selling military-linked liquor, senior AA officers (major rank and above) in areas like Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Rathedaung, Myebon, and Ann [were permitted to consume](#) it.

General Overview

In December 2025, Rakhine State's economy faced severe challenges due to ongoing conflict and junta-imposed blockades, severely impacting agriculture and trade. Farmers struggled with exploitative paddy prices, harvest disruptions in conflict zones like Kyaukphyu, seed shortages reducing groundnut planting, and weather damage to crops such as watermelons, while poultry farming suffered from supply restrictions. Trade routes were heavily disrupted, with Bangladeshi authorities repeatedly seizing boats smuggling essential goods like cement, fertilizers, fuel, and medicines to AA-controlled areas. Market hardships intensified with soaring commodity and gold prices, alongside reports of inconsistencies in AA enforcement of bans on junta-linked products, deepening overall humanitarian and economic strain.

C. Social Crisis: Three Key Highlights

1. Early December 2025: Widespread skin disease outbreaks among displaced and local populations

Skin diseases [spread rapidly](#) among hundreds of displaced families on Rathedaung's Mosel Island (1-Dec) and affected residents/IDPs in at least seven townships (Kyaukphyu, Ramree, Ann, Taungup, Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Mrauk-U) by 6-Dec, highlighting severe healthcare challenges in conflict-affected areas.

2. 9-Dec-25: ULA launches second round of free childhood vaccinations

In AA-controlled territories, the ULA government [provided free vaccinations](#) for the second time to children from newborn to under 5 years old, demonstrating ongoing public health initiatives amid resource constraints.

3. December 2025: Christmas celebrations and community support in AA areas

Multiple AA-controlled townships (Paletwa, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Ann, Myebon, Thandwe, Gwa) [celebrated Christmas](#) (25-26 Dec), with events in Mrauk-U and Minbya districts; AA troops distributed gifts including cattle in Paletwa and presents in Chin areas, while ULA/AA issued official Christmas greetings.

General Overview

In December 2025, healthcare challenges intensified in Rakhine State as skin diseases spread widely among displaced families and residents across multiple townships, while volunteer clinics in AA areas struggled with medicine shortages due to fewer donations and victims of the Mrauk-U Hospital bombing urgently needed supplies. The Arakan Public Health Department promoted affordable herbal remedies, and AA continued proactive health measures by providing free childhood vaccinations to under-5s in controlled areas. Environmental efforts included new rules for migratory bird conservation amid fewer sightings this winter, alongside cultural observances like International Human Rights Day in Kyauktaw. Christmas was widely celebrated in several AA townships with community events and AA distributing gifts, reflecting efforts to maintain cultural and social normalcy despite ongoing hardship.

D. Humanitarian Issue: Three Key Highlights

1. 11-Dec-25: Junta airstrike on Mrauk-U Hospital causes massive civilian casualties

The Myanmar military bombed Mrauk-U Hospital, [initially killing dozens](#); death toll rose to 33 (with 76 injured), prompting widespread donations (e.g., Wai Hin Aung Charity over 400 million MMK on 18-Dec, "White Rebel Brothers" over 100 million on 23-Dec, and total aid reaching ~80 million kyats by 27-Dec from one group).

2. Throughout December 2025: Ongoing junta attacks kill at least 53 civilians in one month

AA and HDSCO reported 53 civilians [killed and 108 injured](#) in December alone from junta airstrikes, shelling, and drone strikes—including 9 deaths (4 children) in Thandwe (31-Dec), 2 women killed by drone in Kyaukphyu (5-Dec), 8 killed in another Kyaukphyu jet strike (12-Dec), and a Christmas Day airstrike killing an IDP woman in Thandwe (25-Dec).

3. End of 2025 summary: Over 750 civilian casualties in Rakhine from junta attacks during the year

Reports by Narinjara stated that in 2025, Myanmar military actions [caused](#) 754 civilian deaths and injuries in Rakhine (31-Dec), building on earlier figures of 1,152 innocent civilians killed by junta forces and militant groups over two years (10-Dec).

General Overview

In December 2025, Rakhine State endured severe humanitarian crises as junta forces continued indiscriminate attacks—airstrikes, drone strikes, and shelling—killing at least 53 civilians (including children) and injuring 108 in one month, with standout atrocities like the Mrauk-U Hospital bombing (33 dead) and strikes on Thandwe (9 dead on 31-Dec) and Kyaukphyu. Civilian displacement escalated due to shelling in Ponnagyun and Rathedaung, while over 7,000 IDPs in Kyaukphyu and others in Ponnagyun faced urgent food, water, and aid shortages, compounded by drying water sources and growing community insecurity from nearby fighting and ARSA activities. Arbitrary arrests of Rakhine IDPs by junta forces occurred frequently (e.g., in Magway Region), with some released after torture or forced into military training, alongside separate incidents of unexploded ordnance and landmine injuries killing or maiming civilians. Despite the violence, philanthropic efforts provided significant aid to bombing victims, highlighting resilience amid a broader pattern of systematic junta attacks criticized by local organizations like HDSCO.

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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