Center for Arakan Studies

# Arakan: What Everyone Should Know

2026

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Center for Arakan Studies
November 16, 2026

This section is for people who live in Arakan and for anyone who wants to understand it. Each page covers one subject, with a short text, one chart or table, and its sources. The facts come from published research, United Nations agencies, human rights groups, news reports and data collected by the Center for Arakan Studies. Every page lists its sources and the date of its facts. Figures on casualties, displacement, prices and health change quickly, so check the latest reports before relying on a number.

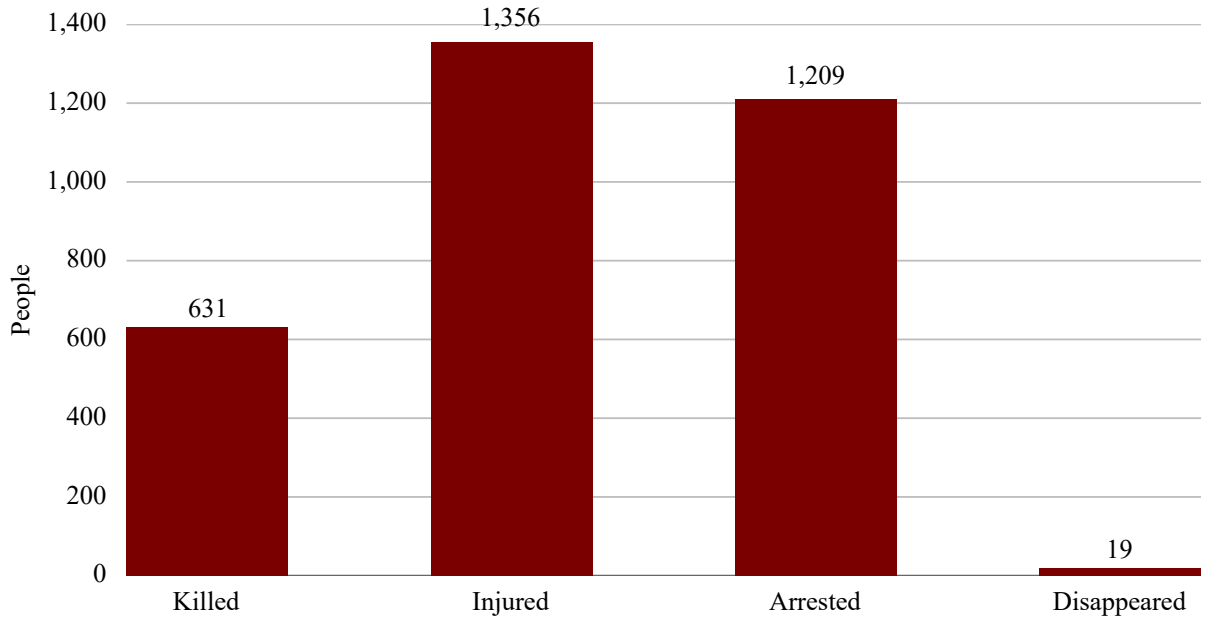
Where accounts differ, this gives each figure and says who reports it. Where a party is accused of abuses, its response is given where one exists. The guide uses "captured" for changes of control and "Rohingya" for the community that uses that name; page 36 explains the names in use. The safety and health pages repeat the advice of the agencies named on them. They do not replace instructions from health workers, mine-clearance teams or other trained staff.

# 1 Civilian Harm at a Glance

Since the war in Arakan resumed in November 2023, thousands of civilians have been killed, injured, arrested or taken away. This page shows what the records count and what they miss.

- Records of the Center for Arakan Studies list 3,215 civilians harmed from 13 November 2023 to 17 August 2026: 631 killed, 1,356 injured, 1,209 arrested and 19 disappeared.
- Recorded harm peaked in 2024, the year most townships changed hands, with 2,109 records. The figure for 2023 covers only seven weeks.
- Of those killed or injured whose gender was recorded, 40 per cent were women. Of those whose age was recorded, about 28 per cent were under 19.
- The ethnicity of 46 per cent of those killed or injured is not confirmed, so harm to Rohingya and smaller minorities is probably undercounted.

**Civilians harmed, by type, 13 November 2023 to 17 August 2026**




*By year: 814 (2023, from 13 November), 2,109 (2024), 222 (2025), 70 (2026 to 17 August).*

The records come from media reports. Reporting fell sharply after early 2025 because of communication cuts and reduced monitoring, so later counts are minimums. Other counts differ: the ULA reported 1,152 killed and 2,153 injured from November 2023 to November 2025.

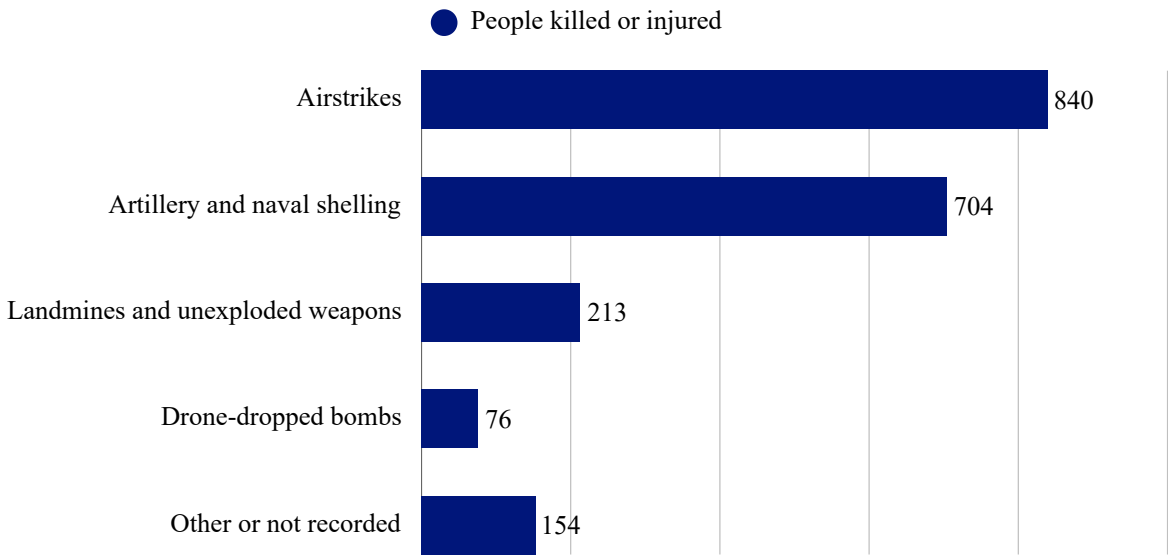
**Sources**: Center for Arakan Studies, civilian harm database (2026); United League of Arakan (2025), statement on civilian losses. Facts as of August 2026.

# 2 What Harms Civilians Most

Different weapons put people at risk in different ways. Knowing which ones cause the most deaths and injuries in Arakan helps families judge danger where they live.

- Airstrikes killed 265 civilians and injured 575, or 42 per cent of all recorded civilian deaths and injuries. Only the Myanmar military has aircraft in Arakan.
- Artillery and naval shelling killed or injured 704 people, 35 per cent of the total. Most of this harm came in late 2023 and 2024.
- Landmines and explosive remnants of war killed 57 and injured 156. Children were 75 of these 213 casualties.
- Drone-dropped bombs, used by both sides, killed or injured a further 76 people.

**Civilians killed or injured, by cause, 13 November 2023 to 17 August 2026**




*Total 1,987 people killed or injured.*

The records list the weapon, not who used it. Artillery may include some fire by the Arakan Army during assaults on towns.

**Sources:** Center for Arakan Studies, civilian harm database (2026). Facts as of August 2026.

# 3 Landmines and Unexploded Weapons: Stay safe

Mines and unexploded shells stay dangerous long after fighting moves on. In 2025 they caused 81 of the 183 civilian deaths and injuries recorded in Arakan, and many victims were children.

- Myanmar had more landmine and unexploded-weapon casualties than any other country in 2023 and 2024, with 2,029 people killed or injured in 2024.
- UNICEF recorded 74 incidents and 117 casualties in Rakhine in 2025, the second highest of any state or region after Shan.
- Residents report that the military laid mines around Sittwe, its creeks and checkpoints in 2024. In 2026 the Arakan Army blamed Rohingya armed groups for border mines and denied laying them.
- The Arakan Army reported clearing more than 2,000 mines in Thandwe and Gwa by June 2025. Clearance is far from complete.

**Safety rules from UNICEF and ICRC mine-risk training in Myanmar**

| Do | Do not |
|---|---|
| Learn what mines and unexploded shells look like | Touch, move or dig out any unexploded item |
| Report anything suspicious to the village leader | Disturb shells, even ones that look already exploded |
| Mark the place with bright rope and a warning sign | Farm or enter land you think may be contaminated |
| Treat wires sticking out of the ground as a warning | Go near a marked danger area or remove warning signs |
| Put up warning signs that adults and children can understand | Assume a road or track you do not know is safe |

*Rakhine figures are minimums. Many incidents in remote areas are never reported.*

**Sources:** Landmine Monitor (ICBL-CMC), Myanmar country profile (2025) (https://the-monitor.org/country-profile/myanmar-burma/impact); UNICEF Myanmar, landmine and explosive ordnance incidents factsheet, January–December 2025 (2026) (https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/reports/myanmar-landmine-and-explosive-ordnance-incidents-information-2025); UNICEF Myanmar (2021), story on mine-risk training for villagers (https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/stories/myanmar-training-empowers-villagers-tackle-unexploded-weapons); ICRC, Myanmar: landmine awareness saves lives (2025) (https://www.icrc.org/en/article/myanmar-landmine-awareness-saves-lives); Center for Arakan Studies, civilian harm database and local media monitoring (2026). Facts as of June 2026.

# 3 Attacks on hospitals and markets

Hospitals, schools and markets in Arakan have been hit from the air. Each strike kills people at the scene and takes away care, food and trade for whole townships.

- The WHO said an airstrike on Mrauk-U General Hospital on 10 December 2025 killed at least 33 people, including health workers, patients and relatives, and destroyed the operating theatres.
- The military said those killed at the hospital were Arakan Army and People's Defense Force fighters using it as a base. Witnesses and the UN rejected this.
- The Arakan Army and an aid worker said a strike on Kyauktaw market on 28 September 2026 killed 49 to 50 people and wounded at least 58. The UN Secretary-General condemned it.
- The military did not comment on the market strike. It has said before that it strikes only military targets and avoids harming civilians.

### Selected airstrikes on civilian places

| Date | Place | Reported toll | Reported by |
|---|---|---|---|
| 27 Feb 2024 | Minbya civilian hospital | Not established | Arakan Army |
| 18 Mar 2024 | Thar Dar village, Minbya | 22 killed, 29 injured | CAS records |
| 12 Sep 2025 | Boarding school, Kyauktaw | At least 22 killed, mostly students | UN investigative mechanism (IIMM) |
| 10 Dec 2025 | Mrauk-U General Hospital | At least 33 killed | WHO |
| 28 Sep 2026 | Market, Kyauktaw town | 49–50 killed, at least 58 wounded | Arakan Army, aid worker |

*Tolls from the Arakan Army come from a party to the war and could not be independently checked. The UN investigative mechanism asked witnesses for evidence after the school and market strikes.*

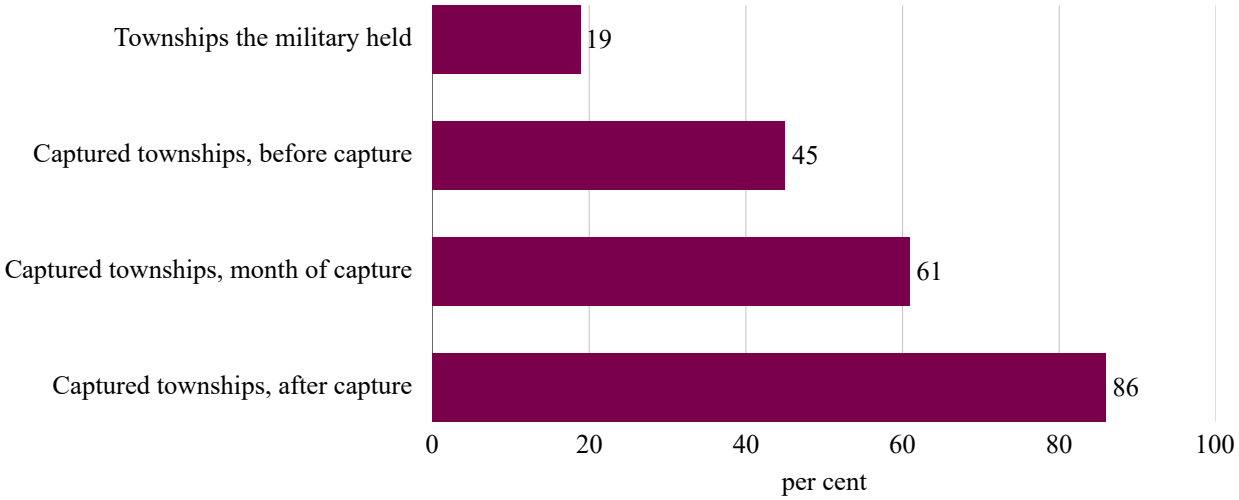
**Sources:** Al Jazeera (2025), At least 33 killed in air strike on hospital (https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/11/dozens-killed-as-myanmar-military-govt-launches-air-strike-on-hospital); Al Jazeera (2025), Myanmar military says armed groups used hospital it bombed (https://aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/13/myanmar-military-says-armed-groups-used-hospital-it-bombed-killing-dozens); Reuters, via The Star (2026), UN alarmed by reports that Myanmar air strike killed 50 (https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2026/09/30/un-alarmed-by-reports-that-myanmar-air-strike-killed-50); AP, via Euronews (2026), Myanmar army airstrike kills 49 and injures 58 in market (https://www.euronews.com/2026/09/29/myanmar-army-airstrike-kills-49-and-injures-58-others-in-market-in-opposition-controlled-r); IIMM (2025), statement on the Kyauktaw school strike; Center for Arakan Studies, civilian harm database and airstrike log (2024, 2026). Facts as of October 2026.

# 4 What changes when a township change hands

When the Arakan Army captured a township, the dangers facing civilians there changed. Arrests and shelling mostly stopped, but bombing from the air went on.

- After a township was captured, recorded arrests fell by about 99 per cent and artillery casualties by about 87 per cent.
- Airstrikes did not stop. In captured townships they caused 86 per cent of air and artillery casualties after capture, against 45 per cent before.
- In towns the military kept, arrests stayed the main harm. Sittwe and Kyaukphyu account for 72 per cent of all recorded arrests.
- The pattern was uneven. In Ponnagyun, Myebon and Rathedaung artillery casualties rose after capture, probably because fighting continued nearby.

**Airstrikes as a share of air and artillery casualties, November 2023 to March 2025**




The analysis covers the military's violence only. Some artillery casualties before capture may have come from Arakan Army fire, and many residents had fled, which also lowered harm.

**Sources:** Center for Arakan Studies, civilian harm database (2026) and township capture dates (2024). Facts as of August 2026.

# 5 Who controls where (October 2026)

Who holds a township decides which rules, documents and dangers apply to the people living there. Control in Arakan changed fast between January and December 2024.

- The Arakan Army took 14 of Rakhine State's 17 townships and Paletwa in Chin State between 14 January and 29 December 2024.
- Its capture of Maungdaw on 8 December 2024 gave it the whole border with Bangladesh.
- The military holds Sittwe, the town and naval bases of Kyaukphyu, and Manaung island. Its counter-offensive from Sittwe in September 2026 stalled within a week.
- In the 2014 census, 82 per cent of people counted lived in the 14 townships the Arakan Army now holds.

**Control by township, October 2026**

| Township | Held by | Since |
|---|---|---|
| Paletwa (Chin State) | Arakan Army | 14 Jan 2024 |
| Pauktaw, Minbya, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Myebon | Arakan Army | Jan–Feb 2024 |
| Ponnagyun, Ramree, Rathedaung | Arakan Army | Mar 2024 |
| Buthidaung | Arakan Army | 18 May 2024 |
| Thandwe | Arakan Army | 5 Sep 2024 |
| Maungdaw, Taungup, Ann, Gwa | Arakan Army | Dec 2024 |
| Sittwe | Military (town and port); Arakan Army holds rural areas | Not captured |
| Kyaukphyu | Military (town and naval bases),contested | Not captured |
| Manaung (island) | Military | Not captured |

Capture dates are the days the Arakan Army announced it had taken each town; fighting for outlying posts often went on for weeks. The census missed about 1,090,000 people, most of them Muslim population.

**Sources:** Center for Arakan Studies, township capture dates (2024) and local media monitoring (2026); Radio Free Asia (2024), on the capture of Paletwa; Department of Population, 2014 census (2015). Facts as of October 2026.

# 6 Cyclones: a recurring danger

Arakan's long, low coast is one of the parts of Myanmar most exposed to cyclones and storm surges. Storms have struck many times since records began, and war now slows warnings and relief.

- The colonial Akyab gazetteer called the cyclone of 13 November 1867 the worst in living memory. A tidal wave swept up the rivers, and recovery took six years.
- Cyclone Mocha hit near Sittwe on 14 May 2023. The ULA's relief committee counted 164 dead, and 288,530 houses damaged in 2,068 villages.
- About 600,000 Rohingya confined to camps and villages, many in low-lying coastal sites, were especially exposed to Mocha.
- On 8 June 2023 the junta suspended all travel permits for aid workers in Rakhine, stopping much of the relief.

### Major cyclones affecting Arakan

| Date | Storm | What is recorded |
|---|---|---|
| 13 Nov 1867 | Akyab cyclone | Tidal wave up the rivers; six years to recover |
| 17 May 1884 | Akyab cyclone | Described as very similar to 1867 |
| 2008 | Cyclone Nargis | Salt water on farmland in Rakhine |
| 22 Oct 2010 | Cyclone Giri, near Kyaukphyu | At least 45 dead or missing; nearly 102,000 homeless |
| 2015 | Cyclone Komen | Salt water on farmland |
| 14 May 2023 | Cyclone Mocha, near Sittwe | 164 dead (ULA); 97 to about 148 (junta) |

Mocha death tolls are disputed: the National Unity Government counted more than 450, and the junta denied media reports of about 400 Rohingya deaths.

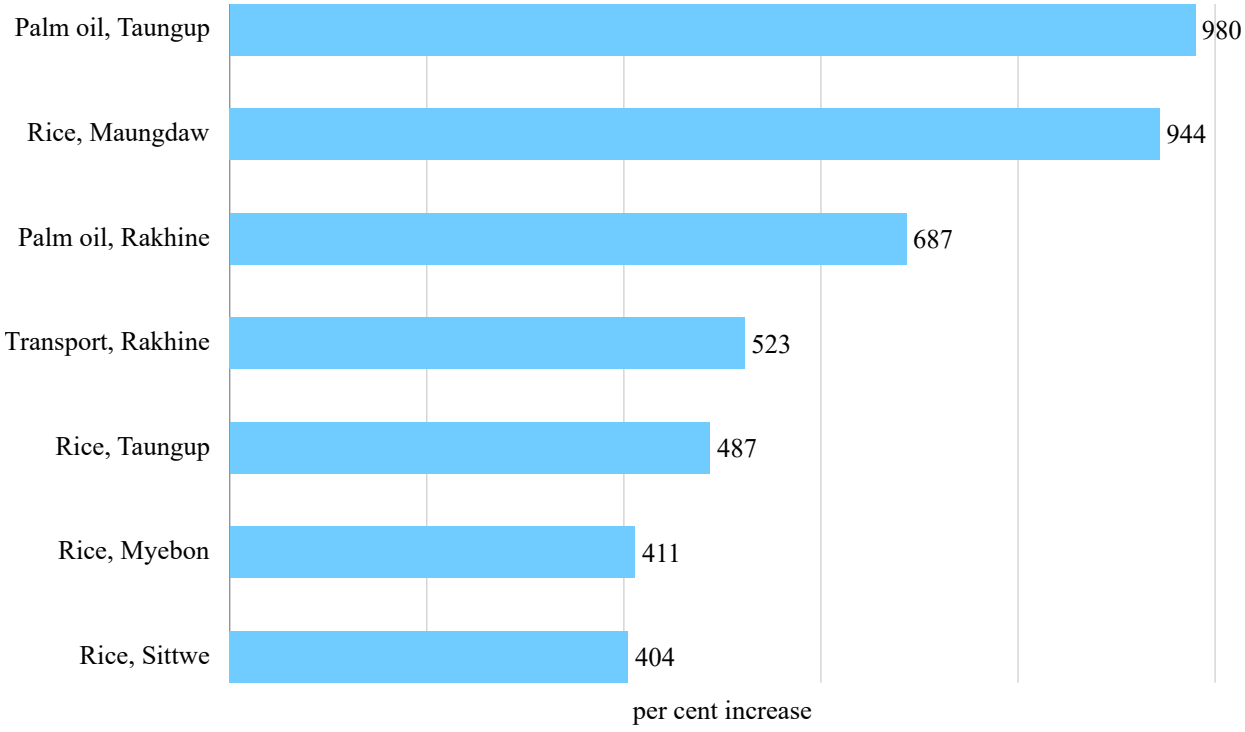
**Sources:** Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District (1917); Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (2017); UN News (2010), Humanitarian agencies seek funds for cyclone emergency in Myanmar (https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/11/360502-humanitarian-agencies-seek-funds-cyclone-emergency-myanmar-un); Human Rights Watch (2023), Myanmar: Junta blocks lifesaving cyclone aid (https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/20/myanmar-junta-blocks-lifesaving-cyclone-aid); Kyaw Hsan Hlaing (2023), Responses to humanitarian needs in western Myanmar after Cyclone Mocha, ISEAS Perspective (https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ISEAS_Perspective_2023_72.pdf); The Irrawaddy (2023), Cyclone Mocha kills 145 in Myanmar, military junta says (https://www.irrawaddy.com/?p=112529). Facts as of June 2023.

# 7 The blockade and prices

Rakhine has long brought in fuel, medicine and much of its food from central Myanmar. Prices of basic goods rose several times over between 2021 and mid-2024, and the junta's closure of roads and waterways in November 2023 deepened the shortages.

- On 13 November 2023 junta troops closed the highways and waterways linking Rakhine to the rest of Myanmar.
- Between January 2021 and July 2024 the price of rice rose by 944 per cent in Maungdaw and 404 per cent in Sittwe.
- In Sittwe, a bag of rice reached 300,000 kyats by early July 2024. On 4 March 2026 petrol there jumped from about 17,000 to 40,000 kyats a litre.
- Petrol cost about 8,000 kyats a litre in Arakan Army-held areas at the same time. Local media report prices there falling by up to two-thirds from early 2025.

**Price increases, January 2021 to July 2024**




Each closure of the Bangladesh or Mizoram trade routes, and each monsoon, has brought new price spikes.

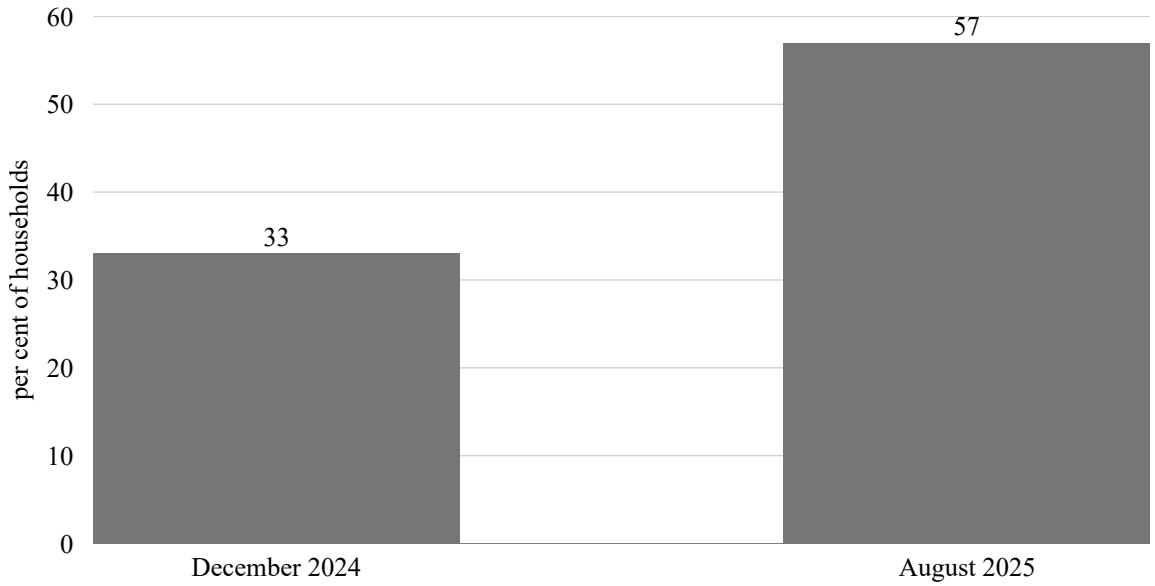
**Sources:** UNDP (2024), Rakhine: A Famine in the Making (https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/rakhine-a-famine-in-the-making); Radio Free Asia (2023), on the closure of roads and waterways; Center for Arakan Studies, local media monitoring (2026). Facts as of March 2026.

# 8 Hunger

Most families in central Rakhine now struggle to buy enough food. The blockade, lost incomes and high prices are the main causes, and harvests have also fallen.

- WFP reported in August 2025 that 57 per cent of families in central Rakhine could not meet basic food needs, up from 33 per cent in December 2024.
- In November 2024 UNDP warned that more than 2 million people faced the risk of starvation, and that local harvests would cover about 20 per cent of needs.
- Rice output fell from 282,000 tons in 2023 to a projected 97,000 tons in 2024.
- In April 2025 WFP cut food aid to more than one million people across Myanmar because of funding shortfalls.

**Families in central Rakhine unable to meet basic food needs**




WFP says conditions in northern Rakhine, which aid workers could not reach, are likely worse. UNDP's 2024 report warned of famine but did not apply a formal famine classification.

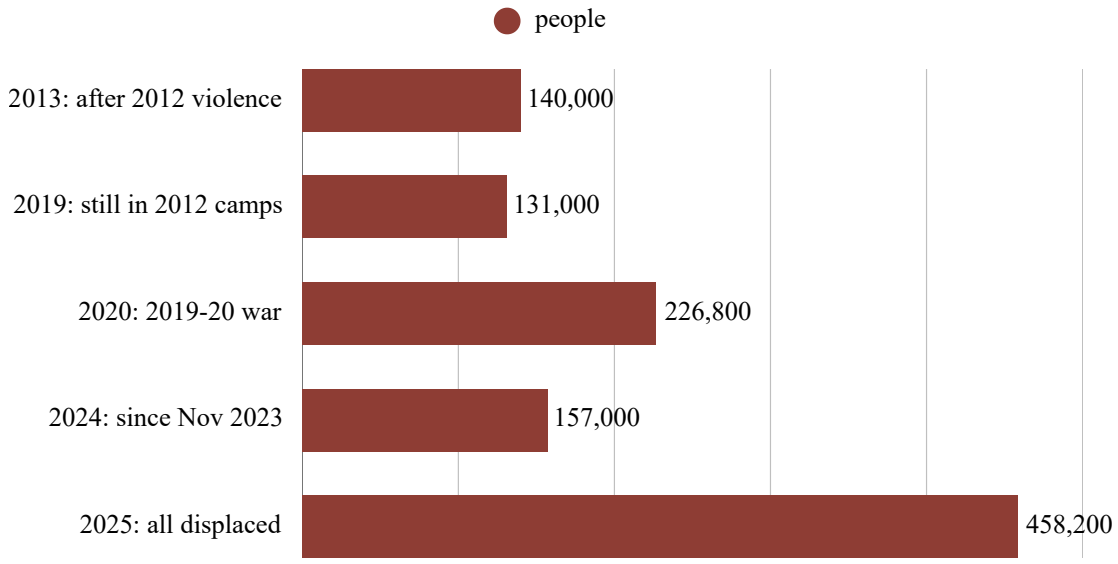
**Sources:** WFP (2025), WFP urges life-saving support in Myanmar's Rakhine State as hunger surges; UNDP (2024), Rakhine: A Famine in the Making. Facts as of August 2025.

# 9 Displacement in layers

Many people in Arakan have been forced from home more than once. Each crisis since 2012 has added new displaced people on top of those who never went back.

- The violence of June and October 2012 displaced at least 140,000 people, most of them Rohingya and Kaman Muslims. Many are still in camps in central Rakhine.
- The 2019–2020 war between the Arakan Army and the military displaced more people. A Rakhine civil society group counted 226,800 in October 2020.
- UNHCR recorded 458,200 internally displaced people in Rakhine in November 2025: 86,700 in the north and 371,500 in central Rakhine.
- Rakhine sources give higher numbers. The ULA's humanitarian office estimated more than 600,000 in November 2025; aid workers estimated nearly 500,000 in January 2026.

**People displaced in Rakhine: selected estimates**




*Each bar counts a different group, so the figures do not add up. The 2024 bar includes Paletwa.*

UN counts rely mainly on registered sites. Rakhine groups also count people staying with relatives and in monasteries, which explains much of the gap.

**Sources:** OCHA (2013), Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State (https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-displacement-rakhine-state-august-2013); OCHA (2019, 2024); DMG (2020), citing the Rakhine Ethnics Congress; UNHCR (2025), Myanmar emergency overview map, 3 November 2025 (https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/119576); Center for Arakan Studies, local media monitoring (2026). Facts as of November 2025.

# 10 Humanitarian access

Food, medicine and shelter reach people in Rakhine only when aid workers are allowed to travel. Since 2019 permission to travel has often been refused, delayed or tied to conditions.

- From 10 January 2019 most UN agencies and international NGOs were barred from five conflict-affected townships. Only the ICRC and WFP were exempted.
- After Cyclone Mocha the UN appealed on 23 May 2023 for US$333 million for 1.6 million people. By 12 June only US$10.3 million had arrived.
- On 8 June 2023 the military government suspended travel authorizations for aid groups in Rakhine, and planned food, water and shelter distributions stopped.
- The UN human rights chief blamed "military blockades" for severe access limits. The AA asks agencies to coordinate through its own aid office and restricts movement for security reasons.
- In December 2025 the UN said only about a quarter of its 2025 Myanmar plan was funded. The 2026 plan targets 4.9 million people, down from 6.7 million.

**Access to aid in Rakhine, 2019–2025**

| Date | Event |
|---|---|
| 10 Jan 2019 | Most UN agencies and INGOs barred from five townships |
| 20 Apr 2020 | UN vehicle carrying COVID-19 samples attacked in Minbya; WHO driver killed |
| 23 May 2023 | UN appeals for US$333 million after Cyclone Mocha |
| 8 Jun 2023 | Military government suspends aid travel authorisations |
| 13 Nov 2023 | War resumes; roads and waterways closed; most aid work suspended |
| Feb 2024 | UN agencies and INGOs leave Maungdaw |
| Apr 2025 | WFP cuts aid to more than 1 million people nationally for lack of funds |
| Dec 2025 | UN reports about a quarter of 2025 plan funded |

Aid organisations also report inconsistent information in the AA's permission system. Neither side publishes full figures on permits refused.

**Sources:** Amnesty International (2019); United Nations Myanmar (2020); United Nations Myanmar (2023), Humanitarian access suspended in cyclone-ravaged Rakhine State, 12 June; Kyaw Hsan Hlaing (2023b); Radio Free Asia (2023a), citing OCHA; OHCHR (2025); WFP (2025); UN News (2025); Davies and Htoon Oung (2026); Center for Arakan Studies, local media monitoring database (2026). Facts as of December 2025.