

Issue Brief

Silent Victims of War and Transition: The Growing Vulnerability of the Elderly in Arakan

No (11/2026)
Older Adults Issues



ULA Healthcare Department providing medical treatment to an elderly displaced Chin woman in Minbya Township during the September 2024 floods. (Photo: Narinjara)

September 25, 2026

1. Introduction

(A) Main Focus	The acute difficulties and severe challenges of elderly people across Arakan amidst the ongoing armed conflict, specifically regarding their physical safety, livelihood and basic survival, as well as their mental and physical health
(B) Geographic Scope	17 townships of Rakhine State/Arakan
(C) Study Period	From May 2024 to September 2026

Background and Context

Since the resumption of armed conflict in Rakhine State, restrictions on transportation, movement, and humanitarian aid have subjected the local population to severe hardships. Among the affected population, the elderly have emerged as one of the most vulnerable groups, suffering the most acute impacts. Under Myanmar's existing laws, an 'elderly person' is legally defined as an individual who has reached or exceeded the age of 60.

Simultaneously with the outbreak of renewed clashes with the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State, the military junta moved to exert strategic control over the entire region by completely imposing land and waterway blockades and severely restricting air travel. As a consequence of this renewed conflict, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Rakhine State has surged, with elderly individuals among those forced to flee their homes.

As the conflict prolongs, civilians bear the severe brunt of war, particularly facing acute livelihood crises. Among the affected populations, vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, the elderly, and children are disproportionately impacted. Elderly people face similar challenges across both the areas still held by the military junta and the 15 townships controlled by the Arakan Army.

Even more severe is the predicament of elderly individuals who lack caregivers. Although Arakanese customs traditionally hold the elderly in high regard and veneration, the compounding crises have left some elderly people completely without adequate support or care, leaving them facing acute hunger and starvation.

This study is primarily based on reports published by local media outlets, findings from human rights organisations, statements issued by the United Nations and other international organisations, and interviews conducted by our Center for Arakan Studies (CAS).

2. Summary of Findings

May 2024

(1) UN Reports Over 3 Million People Displaced Due to Fighting (Voice of Myanmar)

A statement released in the early morning of 4th May by the United Nations Office in Myanmar reported that the number of residents forced to flee their homes due to ongoing conflict in Myanmar has reached over three million.

In Rakhine State, approximately [356,000 individuals have been displaced](#). The United Nations emphasised the critical importance of ensuring aid reaches internally displaced persons (IDPs) in these areas as well as in other states and regions. Nationally, the statement highlighted that approximately 18.6 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, with the three million displaced individuals struggling merely to survive.

June 2024

(2) AA Vows Retaliation Against Junta for Byine Phyu Village Massacre (Western News)

The Arakan Army (AA) warned that it will retaliate against junta-led combined forces for detaining approximately [200 civilians](#) from Byine Phyu Village in Sittwe Township and brutally torturing and executing 53 of them in a mass killing.

Furthermore, junta forces relocated some women, children, and elderly individuals permitted to leave Byine Phyu Village to the Wingaba Field near the Phayagyi in Sittwe Town, where they continue to be detained under inhumane conditions in makeshift shelters.

July 2024

(3) 33 Civilians, Including Women and Elderly, Missing in Thandwe and Ngapali (Western News)

In Thandwe Township, Rakhine State, where intense fighting is ongoing, [33 civilians](#), including women and elderly individuals, have been missing, without contact with their families.

“My mother is Daw Khin Htwe, aged 70, and my younger brother is Wai Phyo Aung, aged 27; both are Education Department staff. Since my mother is elderly, she intended to evacuate the town. However, terrified by the sound of gunfire, they did not dare to venture outside and stayed inside the office. We were last able to reach them on July 12. Since then, we have had no contact whatsoever. We are deeply worried; please help if anyone can reach them,” a relative stated.

Additionally, a married couple, 72-year-old Daw Khin Yi (also known as Daw Sein Ni) and 78-year-old U Myint Shwe from Bodhikone Kanbaet Road and Padamyar Road in Ward No (6) have also been reported missing.

August 2024

(4) Elderly Care Homes in Rakhine State Struggle Amid Declining Donations (Development Media Group)

Elderly care facilities across Rakhine State are struggling to operate due to a [sharp decline in donor funding](#), as ongoing clashes between military junta forces and the Arakan Army (AA) have forced large numbers of residents to flee.

Care homes in Sittwe, Taungup, Kyaukphyu, Ramree, and Manaung townships were previously supported by donors through monthly or long-term contributions. However, since the mass displacement of local populations, these facilities have received minimal assistance.

U Saw Win, who oversees a home for elderly people in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, stated, *“At present, we can only solicit donations from the remaining residents in Sittwe. However, we receive very few contributions and are now relying on our reserve funds to sustain operations.”*

December 2024

(5) Elderly Woman Injured in Junta Air Strike in Thandwe (Western News)

An innocent civilian woman was injured on the afternoon of 17th December when the military junta launched an air strike targeting urban wards in Thandwe Town, Rakhine State.

The injured victim has been identified as [69-year-old Daw Khin May Yi](#) from Ward No (7). Her face and near her eyes were injured by shrapnel.

January 2025

(6) AA Reports 26 Killed, 27 Injured, and 398 houses destroyed by bombing in Kyauk Ni Maw, Ramree Township (Western News)

A junta airstrike on Kyauk Ni Maw village tract in Ramree Township, Rakhine State, [killed 26 innocent civilians](#), injured 27 others, and completely burned down 398 residential homes, according to a statement released by the Arakan Army (AA) on 10th January.

The AA stated that the attack triggered severe fires across the southern, central, and northern wards of the village, resulting in numerous elderly individuals and young children being trapped and burned by the flames.

(7) Number of Displaced Persons Increase Due to Fighting in Rakhine State (Voice of America-Burmese)

As clashes between the military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) continue near Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, thousands of residents are being forced to flee to safer areas, according to local sources and aid workers.

“Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face daily struggles to secure basic necessities. Among the displaced population are vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, the elderly, the sick, and individuals with chronic medical conditions.

There is an urgent [need for medicine](#) for those in poor health, as well as clothing, blankets, and temporary shelters as the winter season sets in,” said Ko Wai Han Aung, an activist assisting displaced persons in Rakhine.

He added, *“As you know, with the onset of winter, temperatures in our region drop significantly. With the growing number of IDPs, the demand for warm clothing, blankets, and shelter has risen sharply. On the ground, we are seeing that the need for healthcare services is becoming increasingly critical as winter intensifies.”*



Displaced elderly women fleeing to seek safety from military junta air strikes in May 2025. (Photo: DMG)

May 2025

(8) AA Releases Approximately 230 Family Members of POWs Captured in Battle for Minbya (Western News)

The Arakan Army (AA) released [a second batch of 225 family members](#) of prisoners of war (POWs) captured during the battle for Minbya Town in Rakhine State on May 16.

Military sources reported that the AA released the POW family members, including children and elderly individuals, following an official discharge ceremony.

The individuals released were military junta POWs and their family members detained following the AA's complete capture of Minbya Town on February 6, 2024.

July 2025

(9) Military Seizes and Consumes Livestock Belonging to Displaced Locals Near Bases in Kyaukphyu (Narinjara)

In Kyaukphyu Township, Rakhine State, military junta forces have been seizing and slaughtering buffaloes and cattle left behind by displaced residents to use as food rations, according to local reports.

Residents fleeing areas near junta battalions in the Gone Chwein and Thit Poke Taung village tracts reportedly left behind elderly family members to guard their homes and livestock. A 50-year-old local man expressed deep sorrow to Narinjara over the [military's unlawful seizure and consumption of these animals](#), which are vital to local livelihoods.

“Families have fled the fighting. Elderly people like us stayed behind, risking our lives to watch over the homes and care for the village animals and livestock, including chickens, pigs, buffaloes, and cows. Now, once the cattle are taken out to graze, they never return. We only owned one or two cattle, and we cannot afford to replace them. It is truly heartbreaking,” he stated.

August 2025

(10) Death Toll Rises to 12 in Mrauk-U Bombing; Victims to Be Buried Today (Western News)

At 11:30 PM on 25th August, military junta forces launched an airstrike using two 500-pound bombs on Daing Kyi Village in the Aung Tat village tract, Mrauk-U Township, Rakhine State, [killing 12 innocent civilians](#) and injuring at least 24 others, according to initial reports from local sources.

A junta fighter jet carried out two separate airstrikes while residents were asleep. The attack damaged more than 10 residential houses, with six houses completely destroyed.

The deceased include children, women, and elderly individuals, while several among the injured remain in critical, life-threatening condition.

November 2025

(11) Junta Air Strikes Kill 12 Civilians and Severely Injure 31 in Rakhine in Two Days (Western News)

On October 30 and 31, the military junta carried out a series of air strikes, drone attacks, and heavy artillery shelling across Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Kyaukphyu, Pauktaw, and Sittwe townships. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 12 civilians: one in Rathedaung Township, six in Kyaukphyu Township, four in Ponnagyun Township, and one in Pauktaw Township. Additionally, 31 people sustained severe injuries, 18 in Kyaukphyu, nine in Ponnagyun, two in Pauktaw, and two in Rathedaung, and are currently receiving emergency medical treatment.

The [casualties include](#) children, women, and elderly individuals. The military junta has been carrying out relentless daily bombing raids across Rakhine State in recent days.

(12) Elderly Man Killed by ARSA Insurgent Group in Maungdaw Township (Narinjara)

On the morning of November 7, an elderly man was killed by members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) near Ngwe Taung Village in Maungdaw Township, Arakan Region.

The victim was identified as [63-year-old U Shwe Thein](#), a resident of Ngwe Taung Village. He was killed by ARSA fighters at around 9:00 AM while taking his cattle out to graze in an area over a mile outside the village.

January 2026

(13) Displaced Persons in AA-Controlled Areas Face Worsening Crisis Amid Sharply Reduced Assistance [Video] (Western News)

Aid workers assisting displaced populations report that the military junta's total blockade on humanitarian assistance is driving internally displaced persons (IDPs) into increasingly dire conditions.

[Nearly 500,000 civilians](#) are currently displaced across both junta-controlled areas and territories held by the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State, with children and elderly individuals constituting the vast majority of the affected population.

(14) Severely Injured Elderly Woman Dies Following Air Strike on IDP Camp in Kyaukphyu (Narinjara)

[An elderly woman](#) who sustained severe injuries when the military commission's air force bombed an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp near Kyauk Ka Ley Village in Kyaukphyu Township, Arakan Region, during the night has died.

The deceased was identified as Daw Aung Mya Nu, aged over 90, originally from Pya Tae Village in Kyaukphyu Township. She succumbed to her critical injuries at approximately 11:00 PM on January 18 while receiving medical treatment.

February 2026

(15) Elderly Woman Killed by Junta Naval Shelling in Kyaukphyu (One Nation News)

An elderly woman was killed on the night of 14th February when naval forces belonging to the terrorist military commission launched heavy artillery shelling in Kyaukphyu Township, Arakan Region, according to local sources.

The deceased was identified as [80-year-old Daw Saw Phyu Ma](#) from Kyauk Pyauk Village in Kyaukphyu Township. She was killed instantly on the spot when a heavy artillery shell fired by the junta navy detonated nearby.

April 2026

(16) Severe Weather Damages Shelters at IDP Camps in Ponnagyun (One Nation News)

On 29th April, heavy rainfall accompanied by strong gales caused significant damage to shelters in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps across Ponnagyun Township, Arakan Region.

As a result, displaced residents are [suffering from inadequate shelter](#) and a lack of sleeping space during rain, with young children and elderly individuals facing particularly severe hardships.

July 2026

(17) Spending the Twilight of Life Without Support: The Plight of the Elderly (DMG)

Hands that once reliably supported their families have now reached an age when they can [no longer rely](#) even on themselves. Beneath a dilapidated home, an elderly man and woman sit in silence, gazing outside.

No smiles appear on their faces; their eyes reflect deep anxiety rather than hope. The pair are 88-year-old U Soe Tun Thar and 78-year-old Daw Hla Shwe Phyu from Kyauk Kyat Village in Mrauk-U Township.

(18) Elderly Without Family Support Face Famine Conditions in Rakhine [Video] (Western News)

In the Arakan Region, the terrorist military junta has maintained a total blockade on all overland and waterway transport, halting the domestic flow of goods since renewed fighting broke out between junta forces and the Arakan Army (AA) in November 2023.

As a consequence of this years-long blockade imposed by the military junta, most residents in the region are confronting acute difficulties regarding basic sustenance and healthcare.

Residents report that [elderly individuals lacking family support](#) and those residing in IDP camps are struggling to survive while suffering from severe malnutrition.

In recent days, an elderly person in their 80s, who had been sheltering in Taung Nar Village in Ponnagyun Township, committed suicide by hanging due to these overwhelming hardships, according to a local Rakhine woman.

(19) Trembling Hands Between Bombings and Famine [Article] (Western News)

There was an elderly man who tragically [took his own life](#) out of fear of becoming a burden. The incident of an 80-year-old man sheltering in Taung Nar Village, Ponnagyun Township, starkly highlights the existential survival crisis confronting the elderly across Rakhine State.

In addition, elderly couples are enduring such severe food deprivation that they lack even the physical strength to speak. Countless similar bitter realities persist on the ground. In Kyauk Kyat Village, Mrauk-U Township, a couple, a 78-year-old grandmother and an 87-year-old grandfather, are struggling alone following the death of their daughter and the total loss of contact with their son residing abroad.

Local youth emphasise that, much like the “Gautami Haven Orphanage Home” care initiative that provides care for orphaned children in Rakhine, homes for the aged are needed to offer refuge and care to vulnerable elderly individuals who no longer have family and relatives’ support.

August 2026

(20) Elderly Man Left Helpless During Mrauk-U Floods Passes Away (Western News)

In Kyauk Kyat Village, Mrauk-U Township, Rakhine State, [an 87-year-old man](#) who fell ill due to

malnutrition and a lack of food during recent flooding passed away on the night of August 30, according to residents.

The elderly man lived with his 78-year-old wife. Due to a lack of support from children or family, the couple faced severe livelihood hardships during the flood period. A local woman reported that the grandfather had become extremely frail and ill due to acute malnutrition and lack of access to medical care.

“He was starving because there was no food. They have no children around to help. He became sick from malnutrition and was so weak he couldn't even make a sound. Now, he passed away yesterday. It is truly heartbreaking,” she said.

September 2026

(21) “It's Like Being in Hell’: Life Under Junta Control in Sittwe (Western News)

Local residents in Sittwe are currently suffering severe livelihood hardships, with the number of people unable to secure regular daily meals growing larger by the day.

According to a resident, day-wage labourers are suffering particularly, with a total lack of employment opportunities and skyrocketing commodity prices leaving them at risk of survival. These survival struggles are no longer confined to working-age adults, directly affecting young children and elderly grandparents as well.

Conditions have deteriorated to the point where some individuals are being forced to [beg on the streets to survive](#), local sources report.

(22) Medical Shortages and Healthcare Personnel Deficits Impair Local Access in Thandwe (DMG)

In Thandwe Township, Rakhine State, where the junta military continues its aerial bombardment, local residents are confronting severe health-related crises due to [acute medicine shortages](#) and a deficit of healthcare personnel.

Beyond scarcity, medicine prices have surged to double their standard rates, causing acute distress for individuals with chronic medical conditions who cannot easily procure essential medicine. A local from Thandwe reported, *“For people with chronic conditions like diabetes or hypertension who require uninterrupted medication, finding drugs once their supplies run out is extremely difficult. When they visit clinics, the supplies are unavailable. When they take prescriptions to pharmacies, most shops are out of stock. Even at stores that do have stock, a blister pack of medicine that normally costs 2,000 MMK must now be purchased for 4,000 MMK.”*

(23) Clashes Erupt on Sittwe-Ponnagyun Border; Air and Drone Strikes Kill Two Elderly Civilians (Myanmar Now)

Clashes between the military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) are continuing along the border between Ponnagyun Township and Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, where junta forces have been conducting drone strikes. Over [two consecutive days](#), aerial bombardment and drone attacks killed two civilians and injured another, according to local sources.

Late last night and early this morning, the military launched a series of attacks using aircraft and drones targeting a village in Ponnagyun Township and Kyeintali Town in Gwa Township, resulting in the deaths of two elderly residents and injury to another man.

At around 2:00 AM today, while residents were asleep, the military launched an FPV drone strike on Kyauk Seik Village, located over four miles from Ponnagyun Town, killing 63-year-old Daw Hla Than Yi.

(24) Junta Air Strike Kills Elderly Civilian and Injures Another in Taungup (Western News)

An [elderly civilian was killed](#) and another injured when the terrorist military junta launched a jet fighter bombing raid near Ywa Thit Key Village in the Wet Kyait village tract, Taungup Township, Rakhine State, local sources informed Western News.

According to a Taungup resident, 60-year-old U Tin Maung from Ywa Thit Key Village was killed in the aerial bombing. Another resident, U Min Swe, sustained trauma to his head and body and is currently receiving medical treatment.

(25) Junta Air Strike on Kyeintali Town in Gwa Kills Elderly Resident and Injures Another (Narinjara)

An innocent civilian was killed and another injured when the illegal terrorist military junta carried out air strikes on Kyeintali Town, Gwa Township, Arakan Region. The deceased was identified as [81-year-old U Oo Kyaw Khine](#) from Ward No. 1, Kyeintali Town, while 49-year-old U Chit San Maung (also known as Chit Pu) from Ward No. 2 sustained injuries.

A junta fighter jet carried out two consecutive bombing raids over Kyeintali Town on September 10, executing the first strike at 9:41 PM and the second at 9:46 PM.

3. Findings

1. According to the United Nations, ongoing armed conflict in Myanmar has forced over three million people to flee their homes. In Arakan alone, approximately 356,000 individuals have been rendered homeless, with elderly persons aged 60 and above accounting for a significant percentage of this displaced population.
2. The elderly are bearing the severe brunt of multiple crises. The military junta's aerial bombardments in the ongoing fighting, drone strikes, and heavy artillery shelling have resulted in numerous elderly casualties and injuries, while leaving others disconnected from their families and utterly without support. Those lacking family and individuals residing in IDP camps face extreme survival struggles due to severe malnutrition, acute medicine shortages, and a complete lack of medical care. In the most tragic cases, the situation has deteriorated to the point where some elderly individuals have taken their own lives out of fear of becoming a burden to others.
3. Humanitarian assistance continues to decline as donor funding shrinks and the military junta maintains strict blockades on aid distribution, pushing internally displaced persons (IDPs) and aged-care support facilities into severe hardship. Furthermore, total blockades on supply chains, land routes, and waterways have driven commodity and medicine prices to exorbitant levels, leaving local populations struggling for basic survival. Due to these challenges, the elderly across Rakhine State remain trapped in extreme systemic famine and unaddressed disease.
4. Furthermore, as armed conflicts persist across Rakhine State, civilian casualties continue to mount in numerous regions, including Sittwe, Ponnagyun, Kyaukphyu, Taungup, and Mrauk-U Townships, as well as Kyeintali Town in Gwa Township, with elderly persons accounting for a significant proportion of those killed and injured. Atrocities such as the Byain Phyu Village incident, where approximately 200 civilians were detained, and 53 were subjected to mass execution, further demonstrate that the elderly remain among the primary victims of these severe violations.
5. Another critical factor is that the internally displaced population in Rakhine State has reached nearly 500,000, with children and the elderly constituting the vast majority, all suffering acutely from the armed conflict and its cascading repercussions. Seasonal shifts present severe challenges, including critical shortages of warm clothing, blankets, and adequate shelter during the winter months. Additionally, storm damage to shelters within IDP camps, compounded by acute medicine shortages and a deficit of healthcare personnel, forces IDPs, particularly the elderly, to endure severe healthcare deficits and basic survival struggles. Under these compounding strains, the elderly and displaced populations across Rakhine State are forced to navigate an escalating humanitarian crisis daily.

4. Analysis

The renewed armed conflict in Rakhine State, which resumed in November 2023, has now spanned approximately two years and ten months. The Arakan Army (AA) has controlled around 15 townships across the Arakan military fronts, leaving only three townships, Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung, under the control of the military junta, while the potential for a resolution to the conflict remains unpredictable.

Simultaneously, since the onset of armed conflict, the military junta has imposed severe restrictions on supply chains by overland and waterway as well as passenger travel into Rakhine State, inflicting disproportionate and acute humanitarian distress on the civilian population.

Among those affected, the elderly across Rakhine State constitute a primary high-risk group bearing the brunt of these impacts. In addition to direct threats to life and physical limb, forced displacement from their homes, and total loss of personal property, elderly individuals confront severe deficits in healthcare access and essential medicine supplies. Furthermore, the breakdown of communications with family members (such as children) working abroad has cut off vital remittance income, compounding their daily struggle for basic survival.

[A December 2024](#) United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for Myanmar highlighted that elderly individuals constitute 12 per cent of the overall population in urgent need of humanitarian aid. Although Rakhine-specific data was not presented in the report, conditions for the elderly have undoubtedly worsened since then. Whether attempting to flee direct combat threats such as aerial bombardments and heavy artillery shelling or enduring severe seasonal weather extremes across summer, rainy, and winter seasons, elderly populations remain exceptionally vulnerable and disproportionately impacted.

The ongoing crisis confronting the elderly in Rakhine State is also connected to broader social and administrative structures. Typically, individuals who have not accumulated retirement savings must rely either on their children and relatives or Civil Society organizations/ Community-based social support and government social assistance programs. However, for those lacking family support, reliance on government and non-governmental welfare initiatives is impossible under present conditions, leaving them with almost no alternative options. Consequently, caught between the ravages of war and institutional transition, elderly residents face unprecedented hardships in the final chapter of their lives, highlighting an urgent imperative for relevant governing authorities to deliver immediate humanitarian relief and systemic support.



About Center for Arakan Studies

The Center for Arakan Studies is an independent, non-partisan research organization established in December 2021 by journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers. The Center aims to enhance understanding of Arakan affairs by publishing rigorous research on human rights conditions, political, economic, and social developments in Arakan, as well as issues related to Arakan within Myanmar and internationally. The Center produces policy briefs and monthly reports on topics related to Arakan, which are published through its website and various publications.

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