

MONTHLY ARAKAN REVIEW

Monitoring of a brief situation of political tension, economic issues, social issues, and humanitarian issues in Arakan in April 2026.

NO. 42. APRIL. 2026

The Arakan Army's 17th anniversary, Ongoing Military Tension, and Humanitarian Challenges



Photo Credit to Western News (DLEPS (police department) of the ULA was supervising traffic and road discipline compliance in an urban area)

Executive Summary

▪ On April 11, AA Commander-in-Chief Maj-Gen Tun Myat Naing declared on the group's 17th anniversary that his forces would fight until the complete liberation of Arakan/Rakhine State, rejecting any compromise with the junta and receiving solidarity from over 30 revolutionary organizations. The junta responded on April 24 by expanding its State of Emergency declaration to more than 60 townships, many of which were already under AA administration, in what analysts viewed as an acknowledgment of its weakening control. Meanwhile, China announced a high-level diplomatic visit on April 21, followed by confirmation of direct talks with AA over BRI railway security, signaling a pragmatic shift in Beijing's foreign policy.

▪ ULA/AA-controlled areas imposed a 50 percent import tax on beverages on April 7, demonstrating growing capacity for revenue generation and customs enforcement as a proto-state entity. Cross-border trade faced major disruptions, including Bangladesh's seizure of 500 cement bags bound for Rakhine on April 4 and AA's arrest of 11 Bangladeshi nationals transporting cannabis on April 25. Most significantly, on April 20, China announced direct negotiations with AA over security for the Kyaukphyu–Yunnan BRI railway corridor, effectively bypassing the junta's authority.

▪ On April 3, ULA-controlled areas launched a crackdown on fake doctors and unlicensed clinics, demonstrating growing capacity to regulate healthcare professional standards. However, typhoid cases rose on April 22 due to poor water quality and inadequate sanitation, prompting health authorities to intensify hygiene awareness campaigns. On the religious front, the Arakan government funded Easter celebrations in Kyauktaw on April 8 and attended a Christian Bible school graduation, signaling a strategic commitment to interfaith inclusivity.

▪ A report on April 1 revealed that 128 civilians had been killed in March alone, and on April 23 humanitarian agencies warned that ongoing airstrikes were directly endangering children's survival across Rakhine State. The military conducted mass arrests throughout April, detaining at least 20 Muslims from Ramree, nine boat travelers in Sittwe, seven Rakhine IDPs in Magway, and approximately 70 residents in Sittwe—many held incommunicado. On April 30, strong winds and heavy rainfall damaged IDP camps in Ponnagyun and Kyauktaw, creating an urgent need for emergency shelter materials as humanitarian conditions reached critical levels.

April

A. Politics: Three Key Highlights

1. AA Commander-in-Chief pledges to fight until all of Rakhine State is liberated (April 11, 2026)

On the AA's 17th anniversary, Maj-Gen Tun Myat Naing [declared](#) that his forces would continue fighting "until the end of the sky and earth" to fully liberate Rakhine State, rejecting any compromise with the junta. The speech was met with solidarity from over 30 revolutionary organizations, including CRPH and various ethnic armed groups, who sent congratulatory messages.

2. Junta declares State of Emergency in over 60 townships, including AA-controlled areas (April 24, 2026)

Myanmar's military regime [expanded](#) its State of Emergency declaration to more than 60 townships, many of which were already under complete AA administration. The move was widely interpreted as an acknowledgment of the junta's weakening control, as it sought to maintain legal authority without corresponding military presence on the ground.

3. Chinese Foreign Minister to visit Myanmar on April 26 (announced April 21, 2026)

Amid escalating civil war and AA territorial gains, China [announced](#) a high-level diplomatic visit to Myanmar, reflecting Beijing's growing concern over regional instability. Just one day earlier, China also confirmed it would hold direct talks with AA over BRI railway security, bypassing the junta entirely.

Summarized Overview

Throughout April 2026, the Arakan Army (AA) continued consolidating administrative and judicial control across much of Rakhine State, celebrating its 17th anniversary with prisoner releases and ethnic unity events, while the Myanmar military junta (SSPC) responded with intensified multi-aircraft airstrikes on civilian areas, causing mounting casualties and condemnation. The junta also engaged in post-election political maneuvering—including a sham presidential ceremony and a new State of Emergency declaration in over 60 townships—which was rejected by AA and allied revolutionary forces. Meanwhile, regional tensions emerged with Bangladesh over drone flights near St. Martin's Island, and China announced a high-level diplomatic visit, reflecting growing international concern over the deepening conflict in Rakhine.

B. Economic Downfall: Three Key Highlights

1. Beijing to hold talks with Arakan Army over BRI railway security (April 20, 2026)

China announced direct [negotiations with](#) the Arakan Army to secure the Kyaukphyu–Yunnan railway corridor, a multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative project. The talks effectively granted AA de facto recognition as a regional economic partner, bypassing the military junta's authority.

2. Bangladesh Navy seizes 500 bags of cement bound for Rakhine (April 4, 2026)

Bangladeshi authorities [intercepted](#) a large shipment of 500 cement bags intended for AA-controlled areas in Rakhine State. The seizure exposed the severe restrictions on construction materials crossing the border, crippling rebuilding efforts after months of intense clashes.

3. ULA/AA imposes 50% tax on beverage imports into AA-controlled areas (April 7, 2026)

The United League of Arakan [began](#) collecting a 50 percent import tax on all beverages entering AA-controlled territories, demonstrating its growing capacity to regulate cross-border trade. The policy generated crucial revenue for governance and military operations while signaling AA's maturation from an insurgent group into a proto-state with functioning customs enforcement. However, the high tax also risked driving more trade underground and contributing to rising consumer prices for basic goods across the region.

Summarized Overview

Throughout April 2026, AA-controlled areas in Rakhine State actively expanded their economic governance by imposing import taxes (including 50% on beverages), temporarily permitting foreign alcohol imports, seizing illegal goods, and distributing free rice seeds to farmers in Paletwa. Meanwhile, cross-border trade faced major disruptions, including Bangladesh's seizure of cement shipments bound for Rakhine and the arrest of 11 Bangladeshi nationals transporting cannabis by AA forces. Agricultural challenges persisted as high cultivation costs reduced crop planting, though onion cultivation showed signs of expansion toward self-sufficiency. Additionally, Beijing's plan to hold direct talks with AA over BRI railway security marked a significant diplomatic shift, while roadblocks and seizures caused basic commodity prices to rise sharply across Rakhine State.

C. Social Crisis: Three Key Highlights

1. DLEPS cracks down on fake doctors and unlicensed clinics in Arakan State (April 3, 2026)

Authorities in AA-controlled areas [launched](#) a crackdown on fake doctors and unlicensed medical clinics to protect public health safety. This enforcement action demonstrated the AA's growing capacity to regulate healthcare services and professional standards across its territory.

2. Typhoid cases rise in Arakan Army-held areas amid water and hygiene concerns (April 22, 2026)

Health authorities in AA-controlled regions [reported](#) an increase in typhoid cases linked to poor water quality and inadequate sanitation. In response, the Arakan Public Health Department intensified awareness campaigns about clean water and hygiene practices.

3. Arakan government provides financial support for Easter festival in Kyauktaw (April 8, 2026)

The Arakan Public Government [funded](#) Easter celebrations in Kyauktaw, demonstrating its commitment to religious inclusivity and minority rights. This gesture toward the Christian community reflected AA's broader strategy of building legitimacy through interfaith outreach.

Summarized Overview

Throughout April 2026, AA-controlled areas in Rakhine State strengthened public health governance by cracking down on fake doctors and unlicensed clinics, while warning residents about heatstroke, measles, typhoid, and dengue fever—with typhoid cases notably rising due to water and hygiene concerns. On the religious front, the Arakan government funded Easter celebrations in Kyauktaw and attended a Christian Bible school graduation, signaling a commitment to interfaith inclusivity. Meanwhile, growing interest among Rakhine youth to study at universities in Mizoram, India, pointed to aspirations for better educational opportunities beyond AA-controlled areas.

D. Humanitarian Crisis

1. 128 civilians killed in Arakan State in March amid airstrikes and conflict-related violence (April 1, 2026)

A reported 128 civilians [lost their lives](#) in Rakhine State during March 2026 due to relentless junta airstrikes and escalating conflict-related violence. The staggering death toll underscored the severe human cost of the ongoing military campaign against AA-controlled areas.

2. Junta airstrikes put children's survival at risk in Arakan State (April 23, 2026)

Humanitarian agencies [warned](#) that ongoing military airstrikes across Rakhine State were directly endangering the survival and well-being of children. Schools, homes, and displacement camps near military targets placed young civilians at extreme risk of death, injury, and psychological trauma.

3. Strong winds damage Rakhine IDP camps; urgent need for shelter reported (April 30, 2026)

Severe weather, including strong winds and heavy rainfall, [caused](#) extensive damage to internally displaced persons camps in Ponnagyun and Kyauktaw townships. Humanitarian responders reported an urgent need for emergency shelter materials as thousands of already vulnerable IDPs were left exposed to the elements.

Summarized Overview

Throughout April 2026, civilians in Rakhine State endured relentless junta airstrikes that killed dozens—including four women in Thandwe and one person in Minbya—while causing widespread displacement from townships like Thandwe and Ann. The military also conducted mass arrests, detaining at least 20 Muslims from Ramree, nine boat travelers in Sittwe, seven Rakhine IDPs in Magway Region, and approximately 70 residents in Sittwe, with many held incommunicado. Humanitarian conditions deteriorated sharply as IDPs faced food ration cuts in Sittwe, severe water scarcity in Ponnagyun, livelihood hardships in Ramree, and storm-damaged shelters across multiple townships, while AA simultaneously faced criticism from local residents over its own arrests in Paletwa and continued landmine clearance operations in Maungdaw.

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.

Contact: info@arakanstudies.org
www.arakanstudies.org