

MONTHLY ARAKAN REVIEW

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

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Targeted Airstrikes and Catastrophic Floods Worsen Arakan's Humanitarian Crisis



Photo Credit to Arakan Princess Media (Villagers in Minbya Township, Arakan, seen struggling with floodwaters.)

Executive Summary

- The ULA consolidated control across Arakan State in July 2026 through banking system establishment, business licensing, and renaming Minbya and Pauktaw to historic titles on July 29. The junta responded with relentless airstrikes killing at least 12 civilians and bombing a POW camp in Maungdaw that killed four detainees, while ground clashes intensified around Kyaukphyu, Sittwe, and the Rakhine-Magway border. A Jamestown analyst declared the AA Myanmar's most effective insurgent force on July 17, as junta convoys suffered heavy casualties and retreated despite extended martial law across 58 townships. The junta's 100-day peace initiative was widely criticized as hypocritical amid continued aerial bombardment of civilian areas.
- Arakan's economy suffered from collapsed glutinous paddy prices on July 2, while landslides on the India-Arakan trade route stranded hundreds of trucks on July 11, disrupting cross-border commerce. Catastrophic flooding destroyed farmlands in Mrauk-U and livelihoods in Kyauktaw between July 13 and 16, wiping out agricultural production for the season. Cash shortages drove up mobile money fees across six townships by July 13, while monsoon delays pushed rice prices to surge by July 24. Bangladesh's coast guard seized 22 smugglers on July 14, while the junta insisted the Kyaukphyu port and railway projects would proceed despite active conflict.
- The ULA replaced Grade-12 Myanmar with the Rakhine language on July 1, opened a free school in Myebon on July 7, and planned to recruit 500 Muslim teachers in Maungdaw by July 30, though financial hardships kept many children out of school. Disease outbreaks surged with over 150 dengue cases and three deaths by month's end, while the Health Department deployed mobile clinics for malaria screenings. Starlink services shut down on July 3 and faced a nationwide ban by July 18, threatening communications for millions. On a positive note, 105 out of 180 monks passed Buddhist examinations on July 17.
- The worst flooding in 20 years inundated over 40 villages, destroyed nearly 200 homes, contaminated drinking water, and affected hundreds of thousands across at least ten townships, with riverbank erosion destroying nearly 70 shops and homes by July 31. Junta airstrikes killed at least 12 civilians and wounded over 60 throughout July, while arbitrary arrests and forced conscription escalated in Sittwe and Ayeyarwady raised concerns. Vulnerable groups suffered heavily, including pregnant women, an elderly IDP who died by suicide on July 16, and two landmine victims on July 28, one of whom died. The ULA/AA, local charities, overseas groups, and the NUG mounted a relief response exceeding 900 lakhs kyat, while the ICRC restored family links and the AA planned a nursing home for elderly IDPs.

A. Politics: Three Key Highlights

1. Junta Bombs Flood-Hit Civilian Areas (July 14–17, 2026)

The military junta [dropped over 50 bombs](#) on flood-stricken Gwa Township on July 14, then repeated airstrikes on July 15 and 17, deliberately targeting civilian zones. These attacks destroyed a stone-crushing plant in Thandwe and a bridge on the Ramree-Taungup road, displacing thousands of vulnerable residents. The AA condemned the bombings as hypocritical, noting the junta's simultaneous "peace process" overtures while killing civilians from the air.

2. ULA Renames Minbya and Pauktaw to Historic Names (July 29, 2026)

The United League of Arakan officially [initiated the historical names](#) of Minbya and Pauktaw townships on July 29, following earlier planning announcements on July 3. This cultural and administrative move rejected Burmanized nomenclature imposed by past central governments. The renaming reinforced the AA's broader governance project, which includes banking systems, liquor import licenses, and local infrastructure management.

3. AA Recognized as Myanmar's Most Effective Insurgent Force (July 17, 2026)

A Jamestown Foundation analyst [declared on July 17](#) that the Arakan Army has become Myanmar's most effective insurgent force, citing its territorial gains, governance capacity, and resilience against sustained junta offensives. This assessment came amid fierce clashes near Kyaukphyu, Sittwe, and along the Rakhine-Magway border, where the AA and allies repelled junta convoys and inflicted heavy casualties. The international recognition boosted the AA's political standing while exposing the junta's weakening conventional military capability.

General Overview

Throughout July 2026, the ULA consolidated control over much of Arakan State by launching a banking system, issuing business licenses, renaming townships, and handling local crime, while fighting daily battles against the junta across multiple fronts. The regime responded with near-daily airstrikes on civilian areas—including flood-hit Gwa and Thandwe—undermining its own 100-day peace initiative and drawing sharp condemnation. Ground clashes intensified around Nat Yay Kan, Kyaukphyu, and Sittwe, where junta convoys suffered heavy casualties and retreated, while the AA also coordinated with allied resistance groups in Bago, Magway, and Chin border regions. The AA's police force handled high-profile rape and murder cases in Ponnagyun and Kyauktaw, conducted drug crackdowns, and enforced rule of law amid wartime conditions. By month's end, analysts agreed that the junta's aerial superiority could not compensate for its collapsing ground positions, as the AA's parallel governance and military resilience made it the dominant power in Arakan, despite ongoing ARSA threats along the Bangladesh border and the regime's extended martial law across 58 townships.

B. Economic Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. Landslides on India-Arakan Trade Route Strand Hundreds of Trucks (July 11, 2026)

A major landslide along the key India-Arakan trade route [on July 11 left hundreds](#) of cargo trucks stranded, severely disrupting cross-border commerce and supply chains. The blockage cut off a vital lifeline for legal imports and exports, exacerbating shortages of essential goods across Arakan State. Recovery efforts were complicated by ongoing monsoon conditions and the region's unstable security environment.

2. Severe Floods Destroy Farmlands and Livelihoods in Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw (July 13–16, 2026)

Torrential rains caused massive flooding that [destroyed farmlands and crops](#) in Mrauk-U Township on July 13, followed by the destruction of small-scale livelihoods in Kyauktaw on July 16. These floods devastated rural communities dependent on agriculture, wiping out entire harvests and leaving farmers with no income for the season. The timing was particularly devastating, coming just as farmers were already struggling with collapsing paddy prices.

3. Rice Prices Surge Amid Cash Shortages and Monsoon Trade Delays (July 24–27, 2026)

Rice prices surged across AA-controlled areas [on July 24, driven by a combination](#) of cash shortages, supply chain disruptions, and the monsoon season's slower goods deliveries. Cash shortages had already driven up mobile money fees across multiple townships—including Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, and Thandwe—by July 13, limiting residents' ability to purchase basic staples. By July 27, authorities warned that extended delivery times during the rainy season could push prices even higher, compounding the affordability crisis.

General Overview

Throughout July 2026, Arakan State's economy faced a confluence of natural disasters, trade disruptions, and financial system strain, beginning with collapsed glutinous paddy prices that left farmers unable to sell their harvests on July 2. Cash shortages emerged as a critical issue, driving up mobile money transfer fees across at least six townships by July 13, while the junta's claims on July 2 and July 4 that the Mandalay-Kyaukphyu railway and Kyaukphyu deep-sea port would proceed despite conflict did little to reassure businesses. Bangladesh's coast guard seized 22 smugglers with 2,400 cement bags and fertilizer from three fishing boats on July 14, highlighting cross-border illicit trade. Overall, the month painted a grim picture of an agricultural and trading economy buckling under the combined weight of extreme weather, infrastructure failures, financial bottlenecks, and ongoing conflict, with no immediate relief in sight for farmers or consumers.

C. Social Crisis: Three Key Highlights

1. ULA Launches Major Education Reforms and Teacher Recruitment (July 1–30, 2026)

On July 1, the ULA [replaced Grade-12 Myanmar language](#) with the Rakhine ethnic language in controlled areas, signaling a decisive cultural shift in education. The ULA opened a free school for 100 underprivileged students in Myebon on July 7 and announced plans to recruit 500 Muslim teachers in Maungdaw District by July 30 to rebuild inter-community harmony. Despite these initiatives, financial hardships kept many children out of school across Arakan by July 23.

2. Brutal Rape and Murder Case in Ponnagyun – Three Suspects Arrested (July 18–24, 2026)

On July 18, a 23-year-old woman from Aung Seik [village was lured away under](#) false pretenses, raped, brutally murdered with a stone, and her body hidden in a ditch. Her decomposed body was discovered on July 22 in a mango grove near Tan Swe village, hands handcuffed behind her back, wearing only a white long-sleeved shirt with no lower garments, and a severe head wound. The DLEPS launched an investigation under Penal Code Section 302 on July 23 and arrested primary suspect Maung Tin Win (37), followed by accomplices Maung Aye Kyaw (29) and Maung Than Soe (21) on July 24. All three confessed, with the mastermind admitting he premeditated the rape, struck the victim's neck and head with a stone when she resisted, raped her after she was unconscious, and hid her body while accomplices waited nearby.

3. Starlink Shutdown Threatens Communications Across Arakan (July 3–18, 2026)

Starlink satellite services became inoperable across Arakan [on July 3, cutting off](#) a critical communication lifeline for residents, aid workers, and journalists. By July 18, a broader Starlink ban threatened communications for millions across Myanmar, raising fears of a complete blackout in conflict zones. The shutdowns hampered the AA's governance capacity, emergency response, and civilians' access to information during the flood crisis.

General Overview

Throughout July 2026, Arakan State's social sector faced compounding crises as historic flooding—the worst in 20 years—inundated over 40 villages, destroyed nearly 200 homes, and devastated farmlands across ten townships, while riverbank erosion left 18 households homeless and claimed multiple lives. On education, the ULA replaced Grade-12 Myanmar language with Rakhine on July 1, opened a free school for 100 students, and planned to recruit 500 Muslim teachers in Maungdaw by July 30 to foster reconciliation, though financial hardships kept many children out of school. Telecommunications collapsed as Starlink shut down on July 3 and faced a nationwide ban by July 18, threatening communications for millions and complicating disaster response and governance. Infrastructure damage—including a collapsed dormitory and riverbank erosion destroying nearly 70 shops and homes in Minbya and Kyauktaw by July 31—compounded the humanitarian crisis, while 105 out of 180 monks passed Buddhist examinations on July 17, offering a small positive note.

D. Humanitarian Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. Junta Airstrikes Inflict Heavy Civilian Casualties (July 1–31, 2026)

Junta airstrikes killed and wounded dozens throughout July, beginning with a Muslim child wounded in Buthidaung [on July 1](#) and escalating to mass casualties by month's end. On July 19, strikes on Taungup, Thandwe, and Ponnagyun killed five civilians and wounded 22 including monks, while July 25 brought three more deaths and 28 wounded in Thandwe. By July 31, a strike on Shwe Hlay village killed four, bringing the month's total civilian deaths to at least 12 with over 60 wounded, while airstrikes also killed four POWs including a captain in Maungdaw on July 4.

2. Catastrophic Flooding Triggers Massive Humanitarian Crisis (July 9–31, 2026)

By [July 10](#), [hundreds of thousands](#) were flood-affected with three deaths, while water contamination hit at least 20 pounds in Minbya and over 500 villagers in Mrauk-U faced a water crisis by July 13. The ULA/AA distributed rice and food to hundreds of households, while local groups, overseas Rakhine organizations, and the NUG contributed over 900 lakhs kyat in donations. Riverbank erosion in Anjanapura and Kyauktaw destroyed nearly 70 shops and homes by July 31, with the ULA providing 800,000 kyat per household to 38 displaced families.

3. Junta Escalates Civilian Arrests and Forced Conscription (July 10–31, 2026)

The junta arbitrarily arrested three Muslims in Sittwe on July 10, a camp supervisor [on July 11](#) ([later re-arrested on July 22](#)), and three government employees on July 23 over alleged AA links. A ferry owner and 13 passengers were charged on July 14 for suspected AA affiliations, while in Ayeyarwady, authorities forcibly conscripted Rakhine youth starting July 18. Malaysia's plan to return 5,000 Myanmar detainees to the junta on July 24 raised international concerns about forced repatriation.

General Overview

Throughout July 2026, Arakan State endured a devastating convergence of junta airstrikes and catastrophic flooding, with airstrikes killing at least 12 civilians and wounding over 60 across multiple townships while also bombing a POW camp that killed four detainees. Simultaneously, the worst flooding prompted a massive relief response from ULA/AA, local charities, overseas groups, and the NUG contributing over 900 lakhs kyat. The crisis was compounded by the junta's escalating arbitrary arrests, forced conscription of Rakhine youth, and detentions on suspected AA links. Vulnerable groups bore the heaviest burden, including pregnant women, an elderly IDP who took his own life on July 16, and two landmine victims in Ayeyarwady on July 28, one of whom died. Despite the devastation, the ICRC restored family links for civilians in Sittwe on July 1, while the ULA distributed free lottery tickets and planned a nursing home for unaccompanied elderly IDPs by month's end, offering small glimmers of hope.

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