

MONTHLY ARAKAN REVIEW

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

NO. 46. AUGUST. 2026

ULA Expands Governance and Conducts Anti-Drug Measures in Arakan



Photo Credit to Arakan Princess Media (19 student drug users from Kyauktaw were rehabilitated and returned to their families by ULA authorities.)

Executive Summary

▪ Throughout August 2026, the junta and AA engaged in intense conflict, with the regime relying on punitive airstrikes against civilians to compensate for ground losses, as acknowledged by the AA on August 6. The ULA/AA expanded governance by imposing curfews, banning underage motorcycle driving, creating a special court for rape and major crimes, introducing a 50% tax on alcohol and tobacco, and sentencing the Ponnagyun rape-murder perpetrator to death. Facing heavy losses, the junta rushed 1,000 troops to Sittwe on August 24 and hundreds more to Mindon on August 26, but these reinforcements failed to halt AA momentum, which forced retreats near Gwa and along the Rakhine-Bago border. By month's end, the regime faced war crimes scrutiny, diplomatic setbacks, and new clashes with ARSA in Maungdaw, underscoring a volatile political crisis.

▪ Arakan State's economy faced acute cash shortages driving mobile money fees to record highs, while inflation sent betel leaf and egg prices soaring, though Taungup chili farmers briefly benefited from strong rainy-season prices. The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) cracked down on fertilizer smuggling near the Naf River, arresting 23 and seizing over 50 bags, while high border taxes weakened legal trade with Bangladesh and threatened supply chains. Flooding damaged crops in Mrauk-U and a swine diarrhea outbreak hit Taungup, while junta airstrikes on the India-Paletwa trade route disrupted regional commerce. By month's end, Rakhine migrant workers remained stranded in Malaysian prisons, lottery markups drew oversight calls, and potential digital payment blocks added fresh uncertainty.

▪ Rising sexual violence sparked outcry, with cases including an attempted rape of a 16-year-old in Thandwe, an assault on a pregnant woman in Mrauk-U, and a teenage girl raped in Taungup, prompting women to demand justice and transparency, while thefts surged in Kyauktaw and Buthidaung. Meanwhile, ULA conducted anti-drug measures by releasing 19 young students, aged 16 to 20 (18 males and 1 female, including 13 from Grade 8 to Grade 12), who had been detained for drug use in Kyauktaw Township, Mrauk-U District, after providing them with rehabilitation and moral education. Healthcare buckled under diarrhea outbreaks in Sittwe killing at least 11 Muslims and four children, and mosquito-borne diseases in Anjanapura, though the AA recruited medical students to address shortages. Education suffered from high fees, teacher shortages, and declining enrollment, yet the ULA introduced a new Rakhine-language curriculum, while environmental and trafficking concerns highlighted broader social pressures.

▪ Junta airstrikes killed over 100 civilians—including nine primary school children in Paletwa—and displaced tens of thousands, with mass-casualty incidents in Thandwe and Gwa overwhelming response capacities. Local charities, overseas communities, and the ICRC mobilized food, shelter, and medical aid, but overwhelmed systems struggled to meet rising needs amid ongoing bombardment. Fishermen lost livelihoods as naval forces confiscated nets, shot at fishers near Sittwe-Rathedaung, and bombing destroyed boats, while landmines injured 10 children in Maungdaw. By month's end, malnutrition among displaced children and mothers, relief operation bottlenecks, and junta arrests of returnees underscored a deepening catastrophe requiring urgent international attention.

A. Politics: Three Key Highlights

1. Intensified Junta Airstrikes and Civilian Casualties

The junta dramatically escalated aerial bombardments across Arakan State, targeting both battlefronts and civilian zones. On August 3, it [dropped](#) hundreds of bombs around Nat Yay Kan, and on August 12, an airstrike killed 14 civilians—including 10 women—while junta leader Min Aung Hlaing met a peace delegation. The AA noted on August 6 that this air campaign reflected the junta's inability to win ground battles.

2. ULA's Expansion of Governance and Judicial Systems

The ULA/AA systematically rolled out new civil and legal frameworks in its territories. Key moves included [banning](#) under-16 motorcycle driving (August 10), creating a special court for rape and major crimes (August 22), imposing curfews in multiple townships, and introducing a 50% tax on alcohol and tobacco (August 26). The AA also sentenced the Ponnagyun rape-murder perpetrator to death on August 7 and handled cross-border illegal fishing cases with Bangladesh.

3. Major Junta Reinforcements and Heavy Fighting on Multiple Fronts

Facing heavy losses, the junta [rushed about](#) 1,000 troops to Sittwe on August 24 and hundreds more to Mindon on August 26 for a new offensive. Intense clashes erupted along the Rakhine-Ayeyarwady and Rakhine-Bago borders, with the AA destroying a junta column near Mindon (over 20 killed) and forcing retreats near Gwa. These deployments failed to halt the AA's momentum across multiple fronts.

General Overview

Throughout August 2026, the junta-AA conflict in Arakan State intensified sharply, with the regime relying on punishing airstrikes against civilians to offset ground losses. The AA and allies launched counteroffensives, inflicting heavy casualties near Nat Yay Kan and expanding into Ayeyarwady and Magway. Meanwhile, the ULA/AA consolidated governance by imposing curfews, taxes, courts, and youth rules in its areas. The junta rushed thousands of troops to Sittwe and Kyaukphyu while facing war crimes scrutiny and foreign diplomacy setbacks. By month's end, new clashes with ARSA in Maungdaw and ongoing repression highlighted a volatile, multi-layered crisis.

B. Economic Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. Soaring Prices and Cash Shortages Hit Arakan Markets

Basic commodities and financial access became severely strained across AA-controlled areas. On August 5, mobile money [withdrawal fees continued](#) to surge due to acute cash shortages in multiple townships, while betel leaf prices reached K70,000 per viss (August 7) and egg prices hit K2,500 in Kyaukphyu (August 8). Meanwhile, Taungup chili farmers benefited from strong rainy-season prices on August 9, highlighting uneven economic impacts across the region.

2. ULA Tightens Agricultural and Trade Controls

The ULA/AA enforced new land and border trade regulations to consolidate economic oversight. On August 11, it [announced](#) that farmland left uncultivated for three years would face seizure, while high taxes were simultaneously weakening legal cross-border trade with Bangladesh. Floods also damaged monsoon crops in Mrauk-U and surrounding areas on August 19, compounding agricultural challenges.

3. Cross-Border Crackdowns, Migrant Crisis, and Infrastructure Threats

The Border Guard Bangladesh intercepted multiple fertilizer smuggling attempts into Arakan, arresting 23 people on August 1 and [seizing over 50 fertilizer](#) bags on August 21 near the Naf River. Concurrently, many Arakanese migrant workers remained stranded in Malaysian prisons without family contact as of August 25, while junta airstrikes on August 27 targeted the key India-Paletwa trade route, threatening vital supply chains.

General Overview

Throughout August 2026, Arakan State's economy faced mounting pressures from inflation, cash shortages, and disrupted trade flows. The BGB aggressively cracked down on fertilizer smuggling while imposing land-use rules and high border taxes that strained legal commerce with Bangladesh. Agricultural production suffered from both flooding in Mrauk-U and a swine diarrhea outbreak in Taungup, driving up food prices further. Meanwhile, migrant workers in Malaysia remained trapped without communication, and junta airstrikes on the Paletwa-India route threatened regional trade. By month's end, lottery ticket markups and the potential blocking of digital payment systems abroad added fresh uncertainty to an already fragile economic situation.

C. Social Issues: Three Key Highlights

1. Rising Sexual Violence and Crime Prompt Calls for Justice

Multiple sexual assault cases and violent crimes sparked public outcry across AA-controlled areas. On August 1, Arakanese women [demanded transparency](#) in handling sexual assault cases, following reports of an attempted rape of a 16-year-old in Thandwe and a pregnant woman assaulted in Mrauk-U. Additionally, a teenage girl was beaten, robbed, and raped in Taungup, while rising thefts in Kyauktaw and Buthidaung heightened community fears.

2. Deadly Accidents and Infrastructure Failures Disrupt Daily Life

A series of fatal transportation incidents and natural disasters caused significant loss of life and travel disruptions. On August 8, a 7-year-old girl died in a car accident in Anjanapura (Minbya), while a boat capsizing in Taungup [on August 1](#) left a teacher dead and eight others missing, with two more bodies later recovered. Flooding caused widespread damage in Myebon and Ann townships, and bridge damage along the Myebon-Ann Road further cut off communities.

3. Drug Rehabilitation and Youth Reintegration in Kyauktaw

On [August 11](#), 2026, the Arakan People's Revolutionary Government's Department of Law Enforcement and Public Security (DLEPS) released 19 young students, aged 16 to 20 (18 males and 1 female, including 13 from Grade 8 to Grade 12), who had been detained for drug use in Kyauktaw Township, after providing rehabilitation and moral education. They were returned to their families with a pledge not to use drugs again. Two mothers at the handover ceremony expressed gratitude to the government for the rehabilitation, with one mother apologizing for previous media statements that may have created a negative impression. The DLEPS conducted rehabilitation, moral education, and awareness programs to help the youths build a better future.

General Overview

Throughout August 2026, Arakan State faced a deepening humanitarian and social crisis marked by rising sexual violence, fatal accidents, and crumbling infrastructure. Communities grappled with deadly boat capsizings, car crashes, and flood damage that severed roads and isolated villages, while thefts and violent crimes surged in both urban and rural areas. Healthcare systems buckled under diarrheal and mosquito-borne disease outbreaks, with at least 15 confirmed deaths in Sittwe alone, though the AA attempted to expand free eye surgeries and recruit new medical trainees. Education suffered from high fees, teacher shortages, and declining enrollment, yet the ULA/AA introduced a new Rakhine-language curriculum and reopened university applications to assert administrative control. By month's end, environmental concerns over Nanthar Island, a human trafficking case in Ayeyarwady, and the launch of a new digital literary magazine underscored the broad social and cultural pressures facing the region.

D. Humanitarian Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. Junta Airstrikes Cause Mass Civilian Casualties and Displacement

The military junta's aerial bombardment campaign inflicted devastating losses on civilian populations across Arakan State and Paletwa. By August 25, Development Media Group tallies confirmed over [100 civilians killed and injured](#) in August alone, with mass-casualty incidents including 16 deaths in Kyaukgyi village (Thandwe) on August 13 and 14 deaths in Paletwa on August 25 that included nine primary school children. The attacks forced mass displacement, with residents of Gwa and Thandwe fleeing repeatedly, while over 4,000 displaced persons in Kyaukphyu required emergency aid by month's end.

2. Widespread Humanitarian Needs and Aid Responses

Local and international organizations mobilized assistance amid growing food, shelter, and health crises. Monastic groups donated K300,000 for flood victims in Myebon (August 1), while Arakanese in Korea [provided school supplies](#) worth over K10 million to displaced students (August 4), and the Young Generation Charity built over 30 homes for IDPs in Ponnagyun, Mrauk-U, and Ann (August 6). The ICRC expanded its operations on August 26, while Mitta groups provided one month of food rations to 4,000 IDPs in Kyaukphyu on August 31.

3. Livelihood Collapse and Secondary Crises Deepen Suffering

Civilian livelihoods collapsed under the dual weight of airstrikes and military harassment. Fishermen faced severe restrictions, with naval forces [confiscating nets near](#) Kyaukphyu (August 24) and shooting at fishers near Sittwe-Rathedaung on August 4, killing one and injuring two. By August 29, displaced children and pregnant mothers faced malnutrition, while vehicle shortages and poor information flow hampered relief operations, and Thandwe residents reported complete loss of income due to sustained bombing.

General Overview

Throughout August 2026, junta airstrikes and ground operations inflicted a catastrophic humanitarian toll on Arakan State, killing over 100 civilians—including school children—and displacing tens of thousands across multiple townships. Local charities, monastic groups, and overseas Arakanese communities mounted emergency responses with food, shelter, and medical aid, but overwhelmed systems struggled to meet rising needs. Fishermen and farmers lost their primary livelihoods as naval harassment, confiscation of equipment, and relentless bombardment destroyed boats, nets, and markets. Meanwhile, landmine and explosive remnants of war casualties, including 10 children injured in Maungdaw, added to the civilian death toll, while junta arrests of returnees from Malaysia and forced repatriation fears heightened insecurity. By month's end, malnutrition among vulnerable groups, relief operation bottlenecks, and the looming threat of further displacement underscored a deepening humanitarian catastrophe requiring urgent international attention.

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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