Center for Arakan Studies

MONTHLY ARAKAN REVIEW

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

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Battle for Napyi Island Continues Amid Civilian Suffering in Arakan



Photo Credit to People's Spring (A map showing Ngapyi Island, where intense fighting is ongoing between the junta forces and the Arakan Army (AA), and the surrounding areas near Sittwe.)

Executive Summary

October

▪ October 2026 witnessed intensified military confrontations between the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army (AA), particularly around Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Werathani, and Ngapyi Island. Despite deploying approximately 2,000 troops and launching extensive ground, naval, and aerial offensives, the junta failed to regain significant territory. Meanwhile, the AA continued capturing junta outposts, attacking military vessels, and expanding military pressure around Sittwe and Ponnagyun. The United League of Arakan (ULA) also continued strengthening its administrative institutions and public-service delivery through recruitment, regulatory measures, and natural resource management.

▪ Arakan's economic situation deteriorated during October due to disrupted trade routes, cash shortages, rising commodity prices, and transportation difficulties. Cross-border trade with India and Bangladesh faced significant obstacles, including the reported seizure of 800 cement bags intended for Arakan, while cash withdrawal fees increased across the region. The agricultural sector experienced mounting difficulties from extreme heat, water shortages, rising farming input prices, and heavy rainfall during the harvesting season. Meanwhile, displacement from Sittwe, increasing airfares, rice shortages, and rising food prices further intensified economic hardship among local communities.

▪ October 2026 saw growing social challenges, particularly in healthcare, education, religion, and telecommunications. Critical blood shortages, extreme heat, and financial hardship placed additional pressure on healthcare services and restricted access to medical treatment. Military airstrikes forced schools to close in Ponnagyun, Werathani, and Kyauktaw, while thousands of Sittwe University graduates faced difficulties obtaining their original degree certificates. Meanwhile, Hindu communities continued their religious celebrations despite security concerns, while prolonged internet blackouts in Thandwe and Gwa increased communication costs and further isolated residents.

▪ The humanitarian situation across Arakan deteriorated significantly during October as intensified junta airstrikes and artillery attacks caused widespread civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction. Major incidents were reported in Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Kyauktaw, Taungup, Paletwa, Werathani, and Sittwe, including attacks on IDP camps and populated areas. The conflict

further undermined civilian livelihoods, particularly fishing and daily-wage employment, while poverty and limited access to healthcare and humanitarian assistance increased vulnerability. NLTA reported that Arakan recorded Myanmar's highest combined civilian death and injury toll, prompting 70 Arakanese civil society organizations to demand the establishment of a no-fly zone to protect civilians.

Politics: Three Key Highlights

1. 6–15 October 2026: Myanmar Junta Launches a Major Offensive Against AA-Controlled Territories

On 6 October, ISP-Myanmar reported that the Myanmar military had deployed approximately 2,000 troops in a major offensive against Arakan Army (AA)-controlled territories. Heavy fighting subsequently intensified around Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Werathani, and Ngapyi Island, with the junta attempting to regain strategically important positions through ground, naval, and aerial operations. However, ISP-Myanmar reported on 10 October that the junta had failed to regain territory despite its major offensive, while the AA continued capturing military outposts near Sittwe on 13 and 15 October.

2. 20–30 October 2026: Fighting Intensifies Around Sittwe as AA Expands Military Pressure

Throughout the second half of October, fighting intensified around Sittwe, particularly near military outposts, naval positions, and the Kaladan River. On 28 October, AA forces attacked three junta warships near the mouth of the Kaladan River, reportedly sinking two of them. By 29–30 October, the junta had renewed its offensive towards Ponnagyun, while reports also emerged of forced conscription of Muslim youths, intensified security inspections, and growing military pressure inside Sittwe.

3. 2–24 October 2026: ULA Expands Governance and Administrative Activities in Controlled Areas

During October, the United League of Arakan (ULA) continued strengthening its administrative and public-service institutions across AA-controlled territories. On 2 October, the ULA announced recruitment for 105 agriculture and livestock positions, while further recruitment announcements followed for public health and HDCO personnel on 3 October. In addition to institutional expansion, the ULA issued driving regulations for Maungdaw and Buthidaung residents on 9 October, prohibited commercial logging in forests and mangrove areas between Kyaukphyu and Ann on 23 October, and warned residents about airstrike risks during the Thadingyut festival on 24 October.

General Overview

October 2026 witnessed intensified military confrontations between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, particularly around Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Ponnagyun, Werathani, and the Rakhine-Magway border areas. Despite deploying approximately 2,000 troops and conducting extensive airstrikes, naval operations, and ground offensives, the junta faced continued resistance and failed to regain significant territory in its major Arakan offensive. Meanwhile, the AA maintained military pressure by capturing junta outposts, attacking naval forces, conducting operations against

military positions, and cooperating with allied resistance forces in other parts of Myanmar.

Economic Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. 7–14 October 2026: Trade Disruptions and Rising Commodity Prices Affect Arakan

On 7 October, Bangladesh's Coast Guard reportedly seized 800 bags of cement intended for delivery to Arakan, highlighting continuing difficulties in cross-border trade. On 14 October, commodity prices increased in Ramree following the bombing of Kyauktaw Market, while cash withdrawal fees surged across Arakan State as trade with India slowed. These developments reflected growing economic pressure on local communities due to disrupted trade routes, insecurity, and difficulties accessing cash.

2. 16–29 October 2026: Agricultural Sector Faces Rising Costs and Climate-Related Challenges

Arakan's agricultural sector faced mounting difficulties during October due to extreme weather conditions, rising production costs, and declining agricultural productivity. On 16 October, extreme heat and water shortages threatened paddy fields across Arakan, while agricultural input prices reportedly increased by as much as twofold compared with the previous year by 27 October. On 29 October, farmers expressed concern that heavy rainfall during the rice harvesting season could damage their crops, adding further uncertainty to agricultural livelihoods.

3. 25–31 October 2026: Transportation and Food Security Challenges Deepen Across Arakan

Following the bombing of Sittwe, increasing numbers of residents fled to Yangon, causing air ticket prices to rise approximately three to four times on 25 October. Meanwhile, rice smuggling from AA-controlled territories into junta-controlled Kyaukphyu, Manaung, and Made Island was reported, while rice prices in Manaung rose sharply, creating serious livelihood difficulties for residents. On 31 October, the Paletwa–Zorampui two-lane road project was discussed in the Indian parliament amid its suspension due to ongoing armed conflict, highlighting continuing challenges to regional connectivity and infrastructure development.

General Overview

October 2026 saw worsening economic and livelihood conditions across Arakan due to armed conflict, trade disruptions, transportation difficulties, and rising commodity prices. Cross-border trade with India and Bangladesh faced significant obstacles, contributing to cash shortages, increased withdrawal fees, and higher prices for essential goods in several townships. The agricultural sector also experienced serious challenges, including extreme heat, water shortages, rising farming input costs, heavy rainfall during the harvesting season, and declining crop yields.

Meanwhile, intensified fighting and airstrikes around Sittwe increased civilian displacement and pushed air ticket prices to approximately three to four times their normal levels, while food insecurity became increasingly serious in areas such as Taungup and Manaung.

Social Issues: Three Key Highlights

1. 9–19 October 2026: Healthcare Crisis Deepens Across Arakan

On 9 October, critical blood shortages were reported in AA-controlled areas, threatening the treatment of patients injured in Myanmar military airstrikes. On 15 October, extreme heat contributed to an increase in clinic visits across Arakan, while financial hardship further restricted residents' access to healthcare services by 19 October. These developments highlighted the growing pressure on Arakan's healthcare system amid continuing conflict, limited medical resources, and economic difficulties.

2. 19–25 October 2026: Conflict and Administrative Problems Disrupt Education

On 19 October, junta aerial attacks forced schools to close in Ponnagyun, Werathani, and Kyauktaw townships, disrupting children's access to education. The continuing security situation created additional difficulties for students and teachers in conflict-affected communities. On 25 October, thousands of students faced difficulties because they had not received their original university degree certificates from Sittwe University, creating further educational and administrative challenges.

3. 20–21 October 2026: Hindu Religious Communities Continue Cultural Celebrations Amid Security Concerns

On 20 October, Hindu devotees in AA-controlled areas scaled back celebrations of the Shanti Mata festival because of fears of military airstrikes. Despite these security concerns, Hindu communities in Maungdaw District successfully celebrated the Durga Puja festival on 21 October with considerable participation. These events demonstrated the efforts of religious communities to preserve their cultural and religious traditions despite the unstable security environment.

General Overview

October 2026 witnessed growing humanitarian and social challenges across Arakan, particularly in healthcare, education, telecommunications, and religious activities. The healthcare sector faced critical blood shortages, increased demand for medical services due to extreme heat, and financial barriers that prevented many residents from accessing necessary treatment. Military airstrikes also disrupted education, forcing schools to close in three townships, while thousands of Sittwe University graduates continued to face difficulties obtaining their original degree certificates. Meanwhile, prolonged internet blackouts in Thandwe and Gwa increased communication costs

and further isolated local communities. Despite these challenges, Hindu communities continued observing important religious festivals, although security concerns forced some devotees to reduce their celebrations.

Humanitarian Challenges: Three Key Highlights

1. 1–15 October 2026: Intensified Junta Airstrikes Cause Heavy Civilian Casualties Across Arakan

During the first half of October, the Myanmar military intensified airstrikes against civilian areas, including villages and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Kyauktaw, and Taungup. The attacks resulted in numerous civilian deaths and injuries, including children, while a 15 October report stated that 23 civilians had been killed and 51 injured by junta airstrikes in Arakan within just 15 days. The attacks also forced residents to flee displacement camps, destroyed livelihoods, and left survivors of the Kyauktaw bombing in urgent need of medical treatment and humanitarian assistance.

2. 19–23 October 2026: Deadly Airstrikes in Paletwa, Werathani, and Sittwe Deepen the Humanitarian Crisis

On 19 October, a junta airstrike in Paletwa Township reportedly killed at least seven civilians and injured many others, followed by further attacks on Chaungsone Jetty on 20 October that reportedly killed more than 20 Arakanese and Chin civilians and injured approximately 20. On 21 October, nighttime airstrikes killed four civilians in Werathani, while an alleged Y-12 bombing of downtown Sittwe on 23 October killed at least six people and injured 37 others. These attacks intensified fear among civilians, disrupted humanitarian operations, prompted NGO and INGO staff relocations from Sittwe to Yangon, and further increased the need for civilian protection.

3. 24–31 October 2026: Civilian Protection Concerns Grow as Arakan Records the Highest Civilian Casualty Burden

During the final week of October, civilian protection concerns continued to escalate as airstrikes, shelling, and landmine incidents affected communities across Arakan, including Werathani, Sittwe, Ponnagyun, and Thandwe. On 30 October, 70 Arakanese civil society organizations jointly demanded the establishment of a no-fly zone over Arakan to protect civilians from continued military air attacks. On 31 October, the Network for Human Rights Documentation–Arakan (NLTA) reported that Arakan had recorded Myanmar's highest combined civilian death and injury toll, highlighting the severe and disproportionate humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

General Overview

October 2026 witnessed a severe deterioration in the humanitarian and civilian protection situation across Arakan, primarily due to intensified airstrikes, artillery attacks, and military operations by the Myanmar junta. Numerous civilian casualties were reported in Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Kyauktaw, Taungup, Paletwa, Werathani, and Sittwe, with attacks on IDP camps, residential areas, and public facilities causing deaths, injuries, displacement, and widespread fear. The conflict also severely undermined livelihoods, particularly fishing and daily-wage employment, while poverty, unemployment, and limited access to healthcare and humanitarian assistance further increased civilian vulnerability.

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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