

Center for Arakan Studies (CAS)

Monthly Report_November_2022

To present the changing conflict map in Arakan and neighboring areas

To analyze the relations among changes in terms of armed conflict plus casualties, arrests, and humanitarian issues

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1. Key Remarks

- The second phase of an informal ceasefire was introduced by the junta forces and the AA on November 26, 2022. Since the resumption of armed clashes on August 2nd, the first week of November marked the highest rate of civilian casualties such as deaths and injuries, compared to the previous three months. This is mostly due to two key causes such as the artillery shellings and intentional gun shots by the junta forces at the village and villagers.
- On the humanitarian front, the suspension of assistance from the INGOs, NGOs and CSOs since September 15 appeared to have more visible negative consequences this month, resulting in the reduction of food consumption and malnutrition for the IDP community. Next, the blockage of communication and transportation routes such as cars and waterways, changed the livelihood system of millions of people in the northern and central parts of the state.
- Besides, the introduction of the current informal ceasefire is quite immediate, given the level of armed clashes and civilian casualties during the second and third week of November. The armed clashes between the two sides stopped on November 20, 2022. But the artillery shelling and, thus, civilian casualties (death) happened until November 22 in Maungdaw township. Yet, the arrests of the civilians still continued up to November 25 when the junta soldiers arrested the administrator of Thanpanchaung Ward, Kyaukphyu, for investigation. It was also the same day that the spokesperson of the junta council spoke about the ceasefire to the media, and the next day, it was also ratified by the ULA/AA.
- AA spokesperson during his press briefing, remarked that the current informal ceasefire is purely a “humanitarian pause” as the group decided to introduce it for the sake of humanitarian cause for the local population. He also added that the military and political standpoints of the ULA/AA would remain the same. Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson of the junta council, said that the ceasefire was initiated for the better situation of the Rakhine people. Consequently, the liberalization of the blockage of roads and waterways was performed by the junta authority, and the potential for humanitarian tasks also appeared. But the news also reported that the junta military continuously carried out the reinforcements of their bases and stations in various ways. And, the signs for the sustainability of the current informal ceasefire were very low. To conclude, the current truce in Rakhine is neither a military agreement nor a political pact between the two parties. It can mainly be described as the resting time for another round of fighting.

2. Background of the Report

The monthly report released by the Center for Arakan Studies (CAS) for the purpose of presenting the new developments related to armed conflict, civilian casualties, and other data, humanitarian issues, and so on for the month of November 2022. As one of the main themes of

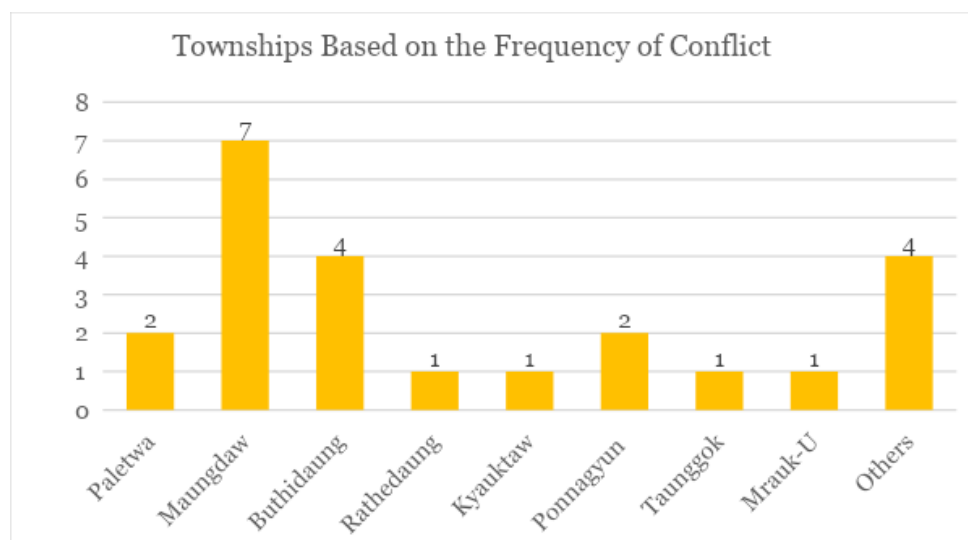
the report, it will mention how the armed clashes between the two parties, the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army played out this month. And secondly, how these clashes have impacts on the issues of humanitarian situations within the state, especially in the conflicted areas. Next, the report has also described how the conflict produced civilian casualties and other issues like arrests and disappearances.

The armed conflict scenarios in Rakhine during November came to rise by an unprecedented amount compared to the previous three months since August when the de facto ceasefire broke out between the two-armed parties. More importantly, the civilian casualties and other impacts on the civilian population also increased at a higher rate. The blockage on trade and travel, including the suspension of humanitarian assistance by the NGO/INGOs, also since September 15, also produced frustrating disasters for the local population, leading to the air-prison situation. The negative consequences of this restriction and blockages came to know more during the month of November, causing huge destruction on the livelihoods of the civilian population, especially for the vulnerable, poor and IDP community.

On the other hand, unexpected news came out when the spokesperson of the military council said that the truce was introduced with the Arakan Army on November 25, 2022. This information was also ratified by the spokesperson of the ULA/AA on the morning of the next day in the Narinjara news agency. According to him, the ceasefire is a seriously considered action to relax the humanitarian crisis of the local population in Rakhine State, but the military and political stands of the group will not be changed. Therefore, the current report has also discussed the broader picture of the current informal ceasefire and what are the potentials of it.

3. Key Figures of the Armed Conflict

Based on news reports, the CAS has identified that at least 23 battles have erupted between the junta military and the Arakan Army over the previous month of November. Still, the most intense and frequent battles were broken out in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, with 7 and 4, respectively. Compared to the previous three months, the number of battles in Paletwa township has declined by only 2. Other less frequent and small-scale armed clashes and mine explosions also happened in the townships like Taunggok, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, and Ann.



On the first day of November, the fight broke out in Taunggok township at around 8 AM with an ambush attack by the AA to the junta forces which contained around 20 soldiers near Thetkeyin village. It took around 10 minutes and according to some sources the casualties from the junta side could be about 10, but it is difficult to rectify that number. In the rest of the first week, the news of the battle was mostly occupied by the northern townships like Paletwa, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Kyauktaw and Minbya. But, on November 8, two clashes took place within 3.1 kilometers southwest of Kazukaing Village, Ann township. Due to the fight, hundreds of villagers had to flee. In line with the sources, the armed clashes resulted due to the offensive behaviors of the junta forces who came to the areas where the AA stations existed. Another fight within the township happened near Hin Ywet village on the same day.

On November 11, a mine explosion also broke out near Min Chaung Bridge in Amyint Kyun Village of Sittwe township along the highway from Sittwe to Ponnagyun. The news said there were some casualties and injuries from the junta side that could not be ratified. As a result, the junta military vessels shot gunfire around the area until 4 PM that day. Till November 20, the battles mostly happened in the central and northern townships like Ponnagyun, Rathedaung, Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. But, after that, the intensity of the conflict was dramatically low. During these 20 days of armed clashes, it can be reported that at least 25 soldiers from the junta side were killed, with 20 injuries in line with the reporting. But the real figures from the AA side related to this news are not available.

4. Critical Notes on Humanitarian Issues

During the month of November, the armed clashes and the heavy artillery by the SAC forces have led the residents of the villages from almost all townships of Central and Northern Rakhine State, specifically from Maungdaw, Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, and Ann.

As of November 28, 2022, the total number of IDPs released by the armed clashes between the two parties has increased to 98,500 in Rakhine State and neighboring Paletwa township, according to the latest UN figures. Armed fighting between the junta and the AA continued until late November, when an informal ceasefire agreement was reached. Dozens of civilian casualties were also reported during the fighting that took place before the ceasefire, particularly in Maungdaw and Ponnagyun townships due to artillery shelling: with more than 7,200 people being newly displaced in Ponnagyun and Kyauktaw townships between 8 and 14 November. As of 14 November, about 20,800 people remained displaced in the Rakhine and Paletwa townships of Chin due to conflict between the AA and the junta forces since the resumption of armed clashes in August. On the other hand, the news also reported that around 23,700 people have been displaced since August 2022 and returned to their areas of origin in three townships of northern Rakhine as the armed fighting had ceased.

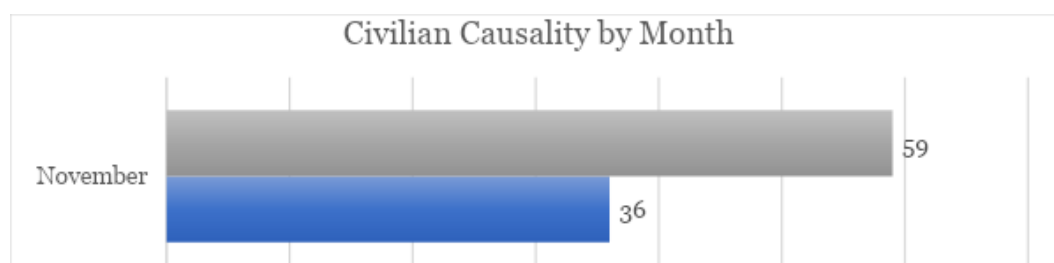
The main reasons why the civilians are caused to displace vary from the artillery shelling into or near the villages, the breaking out of armed clashes near the villages, to the patrolling of junta soldiers into the villages. Villagers in fear whenever the arm clashes between Tatmadaw and AA near their villages and the indiscriminate firing of artillery shells by junta forces tend to flee to nearby villages and take shelter at monasteries as temporary IDP camps mostly. These are the key reasons for the release of the IDP population in the State. Apart from that, the intensity of the humanitarian cause was also contributed by the frequent artillery strikes by the junta military battalions and bases in Minbya, Kyauktaw and Buthidaung townships because these actions feared the farmers leading to the failure of harvesting to the farms. Farmers from Wet Hmine and Peinne Chaung villages in Kyauktaw Township also said that they could not harvest rice crops grown near Light Infantry Battalion No. 375. In Buthidaung Township, villagers are also extremely hesitant to go to their farms as the military often fires artillery shells near the villages of the Kinchaung Village tract. Local farmers have urged the Myanmar military to halt its indiscriminate shelling for at least long enough that they can harvest their crops.

5. Civilian Casualties and other data

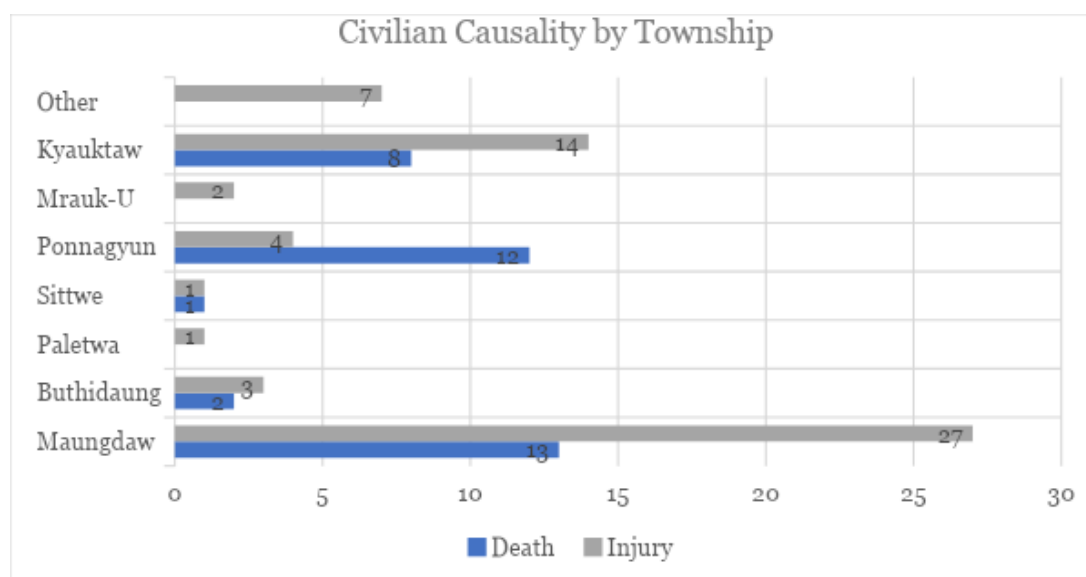
The past 20 days of armed clashes in November claimed the lives of at least 36 civilians in Rakhine State. The civilian fatalities occurred at the highest rate in Maungdaw township with 13 deaths and it is followed by the Ponnagyun township in which 12 people died. Then, it is the Kyauktaw township with 8 deaths and followed by Buthidaung and Sittwe with 2 and 1, respectively. But, the key reasons for the civilian deaths are not mostly due to the active exchange of gunfire or armed fighting between the two groups, but rather due to the random artillery shellings of the junta forces and intentional killings of the civilian people. Two key incidents confirmed this claim. The first event happened on November 8 in Hsininngyi village of Ponnagyun township, where the junta forces killed the rest 9 villagers by shooting intentionally when other villagers were displaced due to the mine explosion by the AA and retaliatory attacks by the junta forces. Then, the second incident occurred when ten residents were killed after three mortar shells landed and exploded in Jeitchaung (Mro) Village in Maungdaw Township at around 12 PM, November 16, 2022. Some sources said that the villagers were killed due to the artillery shelling from the junta military of No (24), Kyeinchaung checking gate and Border Guard Police Force, NaKaKa (7). Among the civilian deaths, there were 30 males and 6 females ranging from a 6 months-old infant to a 92 years-old grandma.

Related to the information on civilian injury, at least 59 people can be reported as injured due to armed conflicts or random artillery shelling of the junta forces. Like the causality figures, the highest rate of civilian injury is also occupied by the township of Maungdaw due to the Jeitchaung village incident with 27 injuries. Then, it is followed by the Kyauktaw with 14 as 9 civilians from Shwepyi, and Shwepyithit villages of Kyauktaw township injured in the same incident on November 11, 2022. Other events of civilian injury occurred in Buthidaung, Mrauk-U, Sittwe and Paletwa with 3, 2, 1, and 1, respectively.

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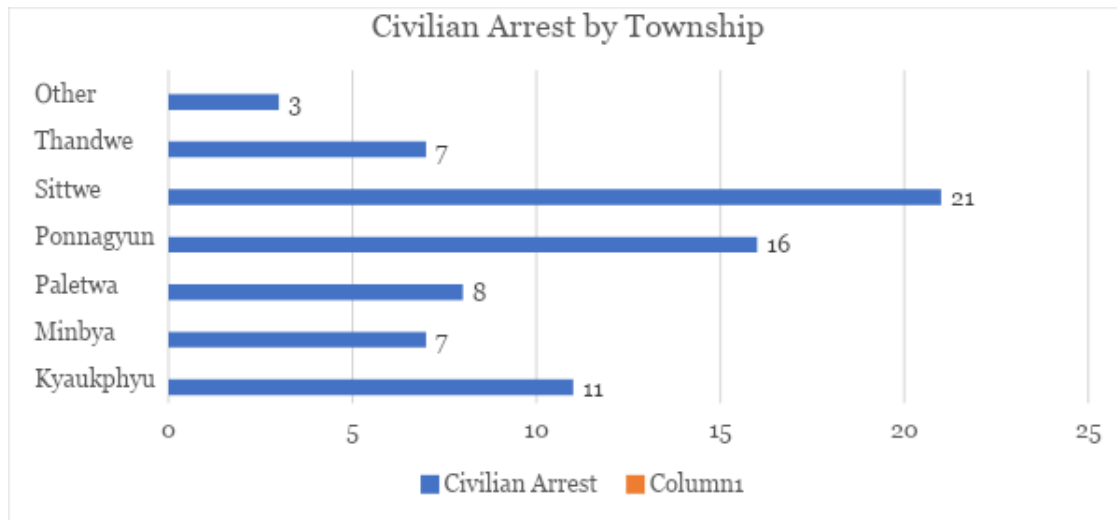


Aside from these two categories, at least 7 people (6 males and 1 female) were also found on the lists of disappearance or missing. At Kyeinchaung security checkpoint in Maungdaw township, 2 persons were missed due to the investigation, while other incidents occurred differently at the checkpoint of the junta forces in Kyauktaw, due to the fleeing from the junta military raid in Ponnagyun townships and other separated cases.



Then, at least 73 civilians have been arrested mostly by the junta forces during November related to the armed conflict and politics. In this month, the townships of Sittwe and Ponnagyun stood as the first and second highest rate of civilian arrests in 21 and 16, respectively. And it was followed by Kyaukphyu, Thandwe and Minbya with 11, 7 and 7 in order. The rest also happened in other townships like Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Ann. Overwhelmingly, 72 out of 73 arrested civilians are men of various ages ranging from around 20 to over 50s. One female individual arrested is a 44 years-old woman from Kyaukphyu who worked as a government employee. In the three weeks of armed clashes and arrests, the number of arrested cases is the highest in the second week, with 40 cases for one week. Since more than 95 per cent of the civilian arrested cases was carried out by the junta forces, the AA also engaged in two events during November. The first one is related to the arrest of Kyaw Zaw Oo, the vice-chairman of the Arakan Front Party (AFP), and the second case is about a police officer from Taunggok. Next, the backgrounds

of the arrested individuals also vary, ranging from the government staff, administrators, business, and university students to ordinary civilians.



About Center for Arakan Studies

The Center for Arakan Studies (CAS) is an independent, non-partisan and research-oriented group established by a group of Arakanese youths who are journalists, political analysts, researchers, social workers, and activists.

The Center aims to conduct research collaboratively with other institutions and organizations, and independently undertake research on the situation of human rights, political, economic, and social dynamics in Arakan, and issues to Arakan affairs in Burma and beyond through analysis and recommendations in favor of policy change and common solutions.

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