

Monthly Arakan Review

Center for Arakan Studies

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Governance, Ground Gains, and Growing Crises

Monitoring of a brief situation of political tension, economic issues, social issues, and humanitarian issues in Arakan in March 2025.



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Key Developments

A. Politics and Armed Conflicts

1. **Junta Airstrikes in Kyaukphyu:** Junta drone strikes and airstrikes targeted Kyaukphyu, hitting Sane Cottage Hospital on March 10, destroying 20 homes in Kap Tha Pyay Village on March 11, and bombing Kyat Tin Village five times by March 14. On March 31, a monk and a civilian were killed, reflecting intensified attacks amid clashes with the AA near the Dhanyawadi Naval Base.
2. **AA's Territorial Advances:** Media reported that the AA had seized over 48 junta bases as of March 8 across townships such as Maungdaw and Minbya, sealed cronies' properties in Maungdaw on March 4, and secured hills near Nat Yae Kan Command by March 11 (unconfirmed). On March 15, media claimed that the AA chief's objectives had been met early, indicating strong territorial gains.
3. **Civilian Harm by Junta:** The junta executed a Sittwe resident for AA tattoos on March 4. By March 12, 45 civilians had been reported executed in Rakhine over two months. A March 27 airstrike in Ponnagyun killed five people and injured 12, including children. By March 31, 106 civilians had been killed and 134 wounded in Rakhine.
4. **General Information:** In March 2025, Rakhine State saw heavy conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and the junta, with significant civilian impact. Junta airstrikes and drone attacks targeted Kyaukphyu, Sittwe, and Ponnagyun, damaging homes and hospitals and killing 106 civilians by March 31, including five killed in a Ponnagyun airstrike on March 27. The AA captured over 48 junta bases, sealed properties in multiple townships, and cleared landmines in Ann for civilian safety. Governance efforts included fire-prevention measures and fuel bans by the AA. The junta planned elections for December or January, but violence persisted, with 330 people detained in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Landmine injuries and an earthquake on March 31 worsened conditions, while the AA released Bangladeshi fishermen amid tensions with ARSA, reflecting a volatile mix of conflict and humanitarian crises.

B. Economics

1. **Economic Volatility in AA-Controlled Areas:** Commodity prices in AA-controlled territories surged on March 6 due to high checkpoint fees, but by March 18 another media agency reported they had dropped nearly threefold, and by March 24 they had fallen by half as merchants adjusted their pricing. Betel nut prices also declined from 480,000 to 180,000 kyat per month by March 7.
2. **Chinese SEZ Operations Amid Kyaukphyu Conflict:** On March 12, Vice Senior General Soe Win pushed for progress on the Chinese-backed SEZ deep-sea port in Kyaukphyu despite intense fighting. By March 15, 27 Chinese armed personnel were stationed at a PowerChina facility, and operations continued near the conflict zone by March 20, underscoring China's strategic priorities.
3. **Human Trafficking and Border Trade:** Displaced women in Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Kyauktaw were targeted by human traffickers by March 27, highlighting conflict-driven vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, timber exports to Bangladesh from AA areas on March 17 and steady Arakan-Bangladesh border trade by March 27 demonstrated resilient economic activity despite junta detentions of traders in Magway on March 13.
4. **General Information:** In March 2025, Rakhine State and AA-controlled areas faced economic challenges and conflict-related issues. Commodity prices fluctuated wildly—rising with checkpoint fees on March 6, then dropping significantly by March 18 and halving by March 24. Betel nut values fell sharply, and worn-out currency caused public hardship. Farmers sought urgent aid on March 18, while the AA regulated alcohol safety and detained a trafficker in Paletwa. In Kyaukphyu, Chinese SEZ projects persisted despite clashes, with junta support on March 12 and Chinese personnel deployed by March 15. Human trafficking targeted displaced women by March 27, and traditional weaving declined in Kyauktaw and Mrauk-U. Border trade with Bangladesh remained active with timber exports, despite junta detentions in Magway. India monitored Sittwe strategically, reflecting a complex mix of local struggles and external interests.

C. Social Affairs

1. **Healthcare Crisis for Vulnerable Groups:** On March 5, pregnant women in AA-controlled areas urgently needed healthcare services. By March 13, vaccinations for pregnant women and children in Rakhine had been unavailable for over a year. On March 17, many children in Maungdaw faced malnutrition, highlighting severe healthcare and nutritional shortages amid conflict.
2. **Water and Disease Challenges in Multiple Townships:** On March 22, six townships—Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Rathedaung, Pauktaw, Minbya, and Maungdaw—grappled with a drinking-water crisis. By March 27, numerous children under ten in Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya, and Ponnagyun were infected with scabies, compounded by a hepatitis A outbreak in Kyauktaw reported on March 7.
3. **AA's Cultural and Educational Reforms:** On March 10, the AA began inspecting local alcohol for safety in controlled areas. By March 15, the ULA invited staff to join its education department, and on March 18, the AA announced it would replace Myanmar history with Arakan history in schools, temporarily halting the former, signaling a shift toward cultural autonomy.
4. **General Information:** Rakhine State faced humanitarian crises and administrative shifts amid ongoing conflict. Healthcare access deteriorated, with pregnant women and children lacking services and malnutrition affecting Maungdaw's youth. Water scarcity hit six townships by March 22, while diseases like scabies and hepatitis A spread, particularly among children in Kyauktaw and other areas. The AA advanced governance, regulating alcohol, recruiting for its education department, and prioritizing Arakan history in schools, while prohibiting trucks over Mrauk-U's ancient wall to preserve heritage. The junta planned matriculation exams for 2,000 students but faced backlash for proposing a Thingyan festival in Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Manaung, and saw a rise in crime in Sittwe. Displaced persons struggled, with war remnants causing disabilities, returnees in Taungup facing challenges, and food insecurity driving begging among refugees. Community efforts, such as free English and computer classes in Rathedaung, offered some relief in a region marked by hardship and resilience.

D. Humanitarian Emergency

1. **AA's Humanitarian and Resource Initiatives:** By March 25, the AA had rescued locals trapped in Ayeyarwady's intense fighting, demonstrating active humanitarian efforts amid conflict to support displaced communities.
2. **Junta's Civilian Detentions and Forced Relocations:** On March 13, junta forces detained over ten displaced individuals from Okeshitpin Town in Bago Region who were heading to Taungup. By March 24, Manaung villagers near a naval base were forcibly relocated by the junta to establish military positions, and on March 31, Malakyun villagers in Kyaukphyu were confined, escalating tensions.
3. **Humanitarian Aid and Funding Challenges:** On March 4, the EU allocated €33 million for Myanmar's displaced, part of a €76 million package. By March 9, 1,428.43 tons of relief supplies had reached Rakhine, according to the junta. However, on March 14, the WFP warned that food aid for over one million people in Myanmar would halt in April due to funding shortages, highlighting strained aid efforts.
4. **General Information:** Rakhine State and parts of Myanmar faced escalating humanitarian challenges amid conflict. The AA rescued Ayeyarwady residents from fighting, while junta actions intensified civilian hardship, with detentions in Bago, forced relocations in Manaung, and confinement in Kyaukphyu. Aid efforts included 1,428.43 tons of supplies to Rakhine and €33 million from the EU, but the WFP flagged a funding crisis threatening food aid for over one million people by April. Displaced communities struggled, with refugees in Ann surviving on rice porridge, Maungdaw's Muslim population seeking pre-Eid returns, and camp residents in Kyaukphyu fearing nearby Mine blasts. Over 10.4 million women and girls needed aid nationwide, while bombed villagers in Ramree faced recovery hurdles. Local media outlets, like Arakkha Times, halted operations due to financial woes, and the UNHCR delivered emergency shelters to Rakhine.

despite difficulties, reflecting a region grappling with conflict, displacement, and strained relief systems.

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