

Highlight

- Armed hostilities have escalated in Rakhine State in the past two days, particularly in Pauktaw and Maungdaw townships, and in Paletwa, Chin State.
- The Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) have conducted an operation in Pauktaw with air and naval support to reestablish control after the Arakan Army (AA) temporarily took the town on 15 November.
- Despite the absence of direct clashes, there have been reports of MAF shelling in AA-controlled areas in Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon, Sittwe, and Ponnagyun townships.
- Since 13 November, 11 deaths and over 30 injuries have been reported. Additionally, more than 100 people have reportedly been detained by the MAF/State Administration Council.
- As of 16 November, the overall number of internally displaced people (IDPs) due to past and present conflict between the AA and the MAF in Rakhine and Paletwa has risen to some 90,000, including more than 26,000 people newly displaced since the ceasefire broke. This is in addition to 150,000 mostly Rohingya people displaced in Rakhine as a result of long-running inter-communal tensions.
- Key transport routes and waterways between Sittwe-Yangon and within various townships have been restricted, impacting civilian movement and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian assistance has been suspended for several days, with limited access being provided to select locations amid the intensified fighting.

Situation Overview

The MAF and the AA resumed hostilities on 13 November, disrupting the relative calm that followed the informal ceasefire established in November 2022. The recent conflict began in Rathedaung township, where the AA is reported to have attacked two Border Guard Police (BGP) posts near the Maungdaw township border. Hostilities have since spread to the townships of Maungdaw, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, and Paletwa. Reports indicate artillery shelling from MAF bases in various townships, predominantly at night. The MAF has also employed naval forces to launch artillery strikes on AA-controlled territories. Local sources have confirmed at least 11 fatalities and more than 30 injuries due to the shelling in Maungdaw, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Minbya, and Ann townships.

The MAF/SAC have increased security measures across the region, including the establishment of additional checkpoints and roadblocks, and conducting household searches to identify suspected AA sympathizers. More than 100 people in Rakhine have been arrested by the MAF/SAC since 13 November. Meanwhile, the AA detained five people, including two in police uniform, in Ponnagyun, suspecting they were en route to Sittwe by boat. Additionally, a curfew from 9 pm to 6 am has been implemented in Sittwe.

The ongoing clashes have resulted in the displacement of 26,175 people (4,765 households) across Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon, Ponnagyun, Pauktaw, and Rathedaung townships. Of these, the largest number - 19,000 people - are from Pauktaw. This displacement adds to the existing situation where 63,884 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were already affected by earlier AA-MAF conflict, along with approximately 150,000 predominantly Rohingya IDPs in Sittwe and Pauktaw from past inter-communal tension. Rural communities, in particular, are living in fear of escalating violence, and there is a high likelihood that the newly displaced will seek refuge in existing urban displacement sites if the situation worsens. The non-displaced Rohingya population - already facing limited mobility - is at risk of further confinement in their villages.

Since 13 November, virtually all roads and waterways connecting Rakhine townships have been blocked, severely restricting movements, including the transportation of goods and trade. In affected townships in Rakhine and Paletwa, most humanitarian activities have been suspended due to the resurgence of conflict, increased security scrutiny, road and waterway blockades, and movement restrictions between urban and rural areas. Services provided by camp-based staff, community-based staff, and volunteers continue in areas without active conflict. However, activities requiring the movement of supplies, staff, or patients, such as health emergency referral services, have ceased due to stringent movement restrictions.

Key Challenges and gaps

- Although stocks have been pre-positioned by the clusters and partners prior to the clashes, gaps remain due to the lack of funding, the shortage of warehouse availability, and transportation difficulties. The highest stock needs and gaps are reported in Rathedaung, Ponnagyun and in southern Rakhine.
- The availability of food, along with other essential commodities, may become critical for local communities due to transport and distribution being heavily restricted.
- Although humanitarian workers have not been directly targeted by the parties of the conflict, humanitarian movement has been greatly restricted due to the recent developments.

*** Information in this update is based on initial inputs from humanitarian partners on the ground. The situation is fluid and numbers are fluctuating.*

For further information, please contact:

Sajjad Mohammad Sajid, Head of Office, sajid@un.org

Danielle Parry, Deputy Head of Office, parryd@un.org, +95 9797002713 (Phone/Signal)

Kyoko Ono, Deputy Head of Office, onok@un.org

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