Scenario Plan

RAKHINE STATE

OCTOBER
2024

Contents

Executive Summary

This Scenario Plan presents Rakhine State-based context projections for the purposes of response planning and strategy. At present, it appears that the most likely scenario over the next six months is one in which the Arakan Army (AA) takes further State Administration Council (SAC) positions in Maungdaw, Ann, Toungup, and Gwa townships, and humanitarian needs continue to rise across the state. A second scenario, of slightly lower likelihood, is that the AA also advances on Sittwe. A third, of lowest likelihood, is a ceasefire agreement. Within any of these possibilities, sub-scenarios that may arise include increased tensions in Chin State's Paletwa Township and an attempt by the AA to eliminate Rohingya armed actors.

While this Scenario Plan provides general guidance, responders may make adaptations to suit the needs, priorities, and strategies of their respective organisations.

Context

For almost one year, life in Rakhine State has been defined by fighting, insecurity, and hardship for civilians. The AA has waged a campaign since November 2023 to take over the state (and neighbouring Paletwa Township, in Chin State), and it has been largely successful: by the end of September 2024, the AA had taken control of 11 townships — Buthidaung, Kyauktaw, Minbya, Mrauk-U, Myebon, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, Ramree, Rathedaung, Thandwe, and Chin State's Paletwa. The SAC had also lost all of Maungdaw Township except for the Border Guard Police (BGP) 5 base outside Maungdaw town, and multiple positions in Ann, Gwa, Kyaukpyu, and Toungup townships; it had lost its presence in many rural parts of these townships; and the only towns remaining under its control were Sittwe, Kyaukpyu, Ann, Toungup, Gwa, and Munaung.

The fighting has had significant impacts on trade, market access, governance, aid, and the movement of civilians. The SAC has tightly restricted overland trade from Ayeyarwady, Bago, and Magway regions since 2023, and there is little movement of goods between the SAC's enclaves in Sittwe and Kyaukpyu and the rest of the state. Meanwhile, formal trade with Bangladesh has also been shut down since 2023, and trade from India via Paletwa Township has been intermittent. As a result, particular types of goods (e.g. medical supplies) have become difficult to find in much of Rakhine State, and the costs of goods — and even accessing cash — have skyrocketed. Likewise the ability of humanitarian responders to operate from Sittwe or source materials (or cash) from elsewhere has become immensely challenging. Farming has been heavily disrupted by active fighting, displacement, flooding, and concerns about explosive ordnance and potential airstrikes. In much of central Rakhine State, the United League of Arakan (ULA) has at least nominally established administrative mechanisms, facilitated the functioning of healthcare and education, and provided livelihood assistance and relief for displaced people. The same cannot be said for northern and southern Rakhine State, where the ULA's power was always more limited, and where SAC structures disappeared more recently. Finally, much of the state's population has been displaced, in large part because so many urban areas have been disrupted by fighting; many ethnic Rakhine people have fled to areas of central Rakhine State under ULA control, and have not been allowed to return to urban areas, with the ULA/AA citing security concerns.

Conditions have also degraded in the small parts of the state still under SAC control, where SAC troops have implemented measures to ward off attacks and have prevented civilians from leaving. Coastal Kyaukpyu Township remains somewhat of an anomaly, apparently protected from fighting by the presence of large-scale Chinese investments that neither the SAC nor the AA is inclined to threaten, but livelihoods have suffered there nonetheless; there are frequent reports of farmers or foragers being injured by explosive ordnance, and, sources have told this analytical unit, the SAC prevents town residents from fishing in nearby waters. In Sittwe Township, the SAC has displaced at least a dozen villages, in which it took up defensive positions, and relocated residents to Sittwe town. Meanwhile economic life in the town has been choked by the absence of overland trade, the SAC has detained hundreds of residents this year (often on suspicion of ties to the ULA/AA), and reports suggest that crime has increased. Here, as well as in Ann and Gwa towns, people have tried to brace for the arrival of fighting.

Finally, Rohingya communities have been victims of violence and seen the unravelling of intercommunal relations. Amid drawn out fighting in around Maungdaw town, Rohingya-populated areas have frequently been sites of gunfire, explosions, and death, in part because the SAC prevented people from leaving and because AA fighters took positions in these areas. Though the AA has routed the SAC from much of Maungdaw Township and all of Buthidaung Township, tens of thousands of Rohingya residents of these townships remain displaced and in need, and their homes have been destroyed; many Rohingya people have also tried to flee from the violence in northern Rakhine State, across the Naf River and into Bangladesh, but the majority have been turned back. Meanwhile, the SAC's recruitment (much of it likely forcible in nature) of Rohingya people in the state, as well as recruitment (again, likely mainly by force) by armed actors in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, has both sent thousands of young Rohingya men to die and created the illusion — for some people — that Rohingya people's sympathies lie with the SAC and against the AA. ULA/AA leaders and ethnic Rakhine civilians have voiced such opinions (or characterisations), and Rohingya people from across the state have told this analytical unit about degrading intercommunal relations in their areas.
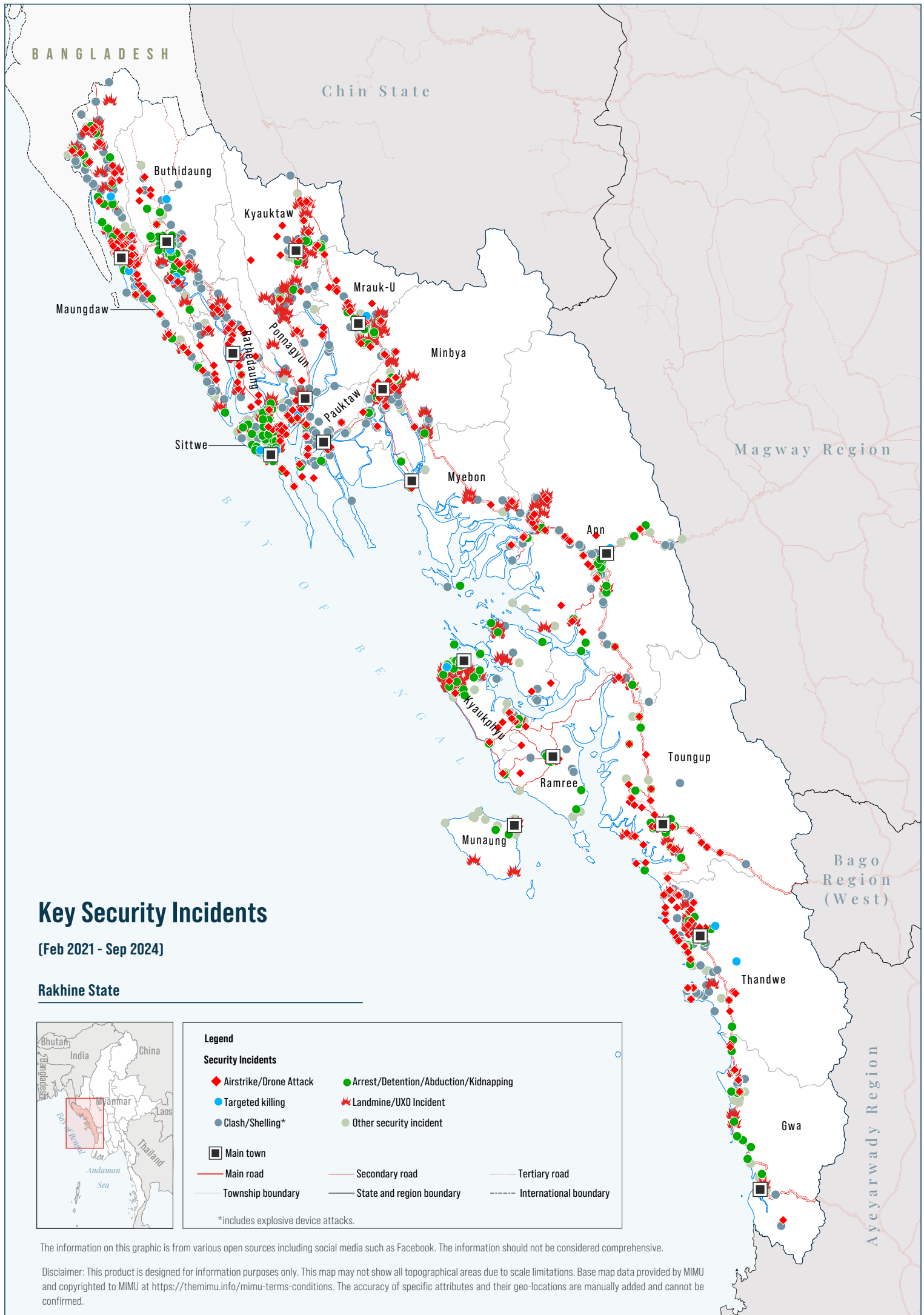
Key Stakeholders

The AA was established in 2009 on the Myanmar-China border in Kachin State with support from the Kachin Independence Organisation/Army (KIO/A), and it has since become one of the largest — and most heavily supported amongst the ethnic group it represents — ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) in Myanmar. The group's political goal is to create an "Arakan Nation" through the "way of Rakhita", an ideology which encapsulates "the struggle for national liberation and the restoration of Arakan sovereignty to the people of Arakan." The AA has been fighting the Myanmar military since 2012 and has claimed to have 30,000 troops. This claim should be treated with caution, however, and some AA troops remain stationed in KIO/A-controlled areas, and in Northern Shan State, where the group maintains bases and close links to Shan State-based EAOs including the other Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BA) members.

Three months before the coup, the Myanmar military and the AA agreed on a ceasefire after nearly three years of fighting. Within six months, the SAC had ended the long-term internet shutdown in western Myanmar, released some imprisoned Rakhine figureheads, and de-listed the AA as a terrorist organisation. These were all likely designed to curry favour amongst the Rakhine people and political institutions. Following this ceasefire, the AA expanded its administrative presence across northern and central Rakhine State, accelerating its political and administrative authority and establishing a humanitarian affairs wing, the Humanitarian and Development Coordination Office (HDCO). Much of the ULA's rapid growth in governance capacity has involved co-opting SAC administrative mechanisms largely staffed in the state by ethnic Rakhine people: in some sectors, it created independent structures to replace the SAC's; elsewhere, it permitted SAC structures to continue operating, while simultaneously redirecting resources and services. Tensions have simmered between the SAC and ULA/AA due to overlapping and competing administrations in Rakhine State, and fighting began again before a 'humanitarian pause' was agreed upon in November 2022 — for which the AA cited the toll on Rakhine communities due to SAC blockades on food and commodities.

While the overwhelming majority of armed incidents in Rakhine State since the coup have involved these two armed actors, a small number have involved others, often claiming to be the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO),

or Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA) and operating on the border and within the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. These actors have allegiances with neither the AA nor the SAC, and they largely compete with one another for control of resources and criminal activities in the Rohingya refugee camps. However, the resumption of fighting in November 2023 reportedly led to increased coordination between these actors and the SAC, all of which sought to stop the AA's advance across (northern) Rakhine State; beyond the armed actors' alleged recruitment in refugee camps on the SAC's behalf, there have been frequent reports of their participation in battle and destruction — and of their members being killed — alongside SAC troops. Though the SAC seems to be nearly finished in northern Rakhine State, the ability of Rohingya armed actors to launch attacks from border areas is likely to present a continued threat to Rohingya communities in Rakhine State, and to present a continued pretext for fighting; the AA has consistently said it will not tolerate the presence of any other armed actor in Rakhine State.

BANGLADESH

Chin State

Buthidaung

Kyauktaw

Mrauk-U

Minbya

Maungdaw

Ponnagyun

Rathedaung

Magway Region

Pauktaw

Sittwe

Myebon

Ann

BAY OF BENGAL

Kyaukpyu

Toungup

Ramree

Bago Region (West)

Munaung

Key Security Incidents

(Feb 2021 - Sep 2024)

Rakhine State

Thandwe

Ayeyarwady Region

Gwa

Legend

Security Incidents

◆ Airstrike/Drone Attack   ● Arrest/Detention/Abduction/Kidnapping

● Targeted killing   ✹ Landmine/UXO Incident

● Clash/Shelling*   ● Other security incident

▣ Main town

— Main road   — Secondary road   ···· Tertiary road

— Township boundary   — State and region boundary   ---- International boundary

*includes explosive device attacks.

Scenario 1:
AA Captures North and South Rakhine Within Six Months

LIKELIHOOD: �\|▋▋▋▋▋▋▋□\|

In this scenario, fighting continues in Rakhine State, as the AA attempts to seize more positions and territory from the SAC. The AA ultimately takes Maungdaw, Toungup, and Gwa townships, and Ann Township also becomes consumed by fighting. Large populations of Rohingya people in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships are unable to return to their homes, many of which have been destroyed, and therefore remain in camps and dispersed across Rohingya villages. In Gwa and Toungup townships, destruction of houses and farmland, and fears of explosive ordnance and SAC airstrikes, prevent many people from returning to their homes and livelihood activities, but there is greater support from the ULA/AA here. Fighting in Ann Township is drawn out as the AA moves closer to the SAC's Western Regional Command headquarters — a larger, better-equipped base than many of those the AA has taken, and one that the SAC may be able to reinforce because of its greater accessibility from Magway Region.

In central Rakhine State, the ULA continues to build out its governance-related structures, albeit with limited resources. It tries to facilitate the provision of healthcare and education, though at times these may be largely reliant on payments by the individuals receiving services. Internet and phone connectivity remain stifled, with knock-on effects for civilians throughout the state. In southern Rakhine State, the ULA/AA makes efforts to gain popular support.

Analysis

The AA has suggested, in the past, that it aims to take control of all of Rakhine State. Over the past 11 months, it has largely done so, and there is little reason to believe that it will not keep pushing to capture as much territory in the state as possible. While the SAC is likely to fight intensely to keep its remaining positions, it has been largely unsuccessful thus far: in Maungdaw Township, the SAC is down to its last base, and while it has shown its ability to reinforce troops there by air, it appears to be fighting a losing battle; and in the south, the SAC has lost its largest naval base, making the resupply of troops more challenging, particularly if the AA is able to effectively cut off its road access.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the SAC as a whole has far greater resources than the AA, and could feasibly shift troops from central Myanmar (or by ship from else-where in the country) into southern Rakhine State in order to defend its positions there. Conversely, the AA could find its resources tied up farther north, and may have stretched itself too thin over the past 11 months to mount as fierce a campaign in the south. Finally, southern Rakhine is a part of the State where the ULA/AA has historically had less popular support, presence, or power, and it may decide that — at the moment — a fight here is not worth the cost.

Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	**Food security**	**Protection**	**Livelihoods**	**Health**
Displacement is likely to worsen in this scenario, as the spread of fighting destroys homes and renders areas — notably includ-ing Ann and Gwa towns — more insecure. At the same time, it remains challenging for many people displaced since November 2023 to return home.	Food security is likely to worsen in townships with fighting, in part because the shutdown of urban markets can affect surrounding rural areas. However, as fighting subsides, the movement of goods could increase: in the north, from Bangladesh and India; in the south, via small boats from Ayeyarwady Region.	Protection is likely to worsen in Maungdaw, Ann, Toungup, and Gwa town-ships in this scenario, as more people are impacted by fighting near their communities. Throughout the state, the threats posed by airstrikes and naval shelling, as well as phone and internet cuts, mean that protection remains a challenge.	Livelihoods are likely to worsen in areas with fighting in this scenario, as the spread of fighting disrupts agricultural, maritime, and other activities. Displacement, persistent threats from explosive ordnance, difficulties accessing inputs and cash, and other factors are also likely to make livelihoods more challenging.	Health is likely to worsen in this sce-nario, by virtue of the increased caseload for healthcare providers, the destruction of healthcare locations, difficulties accessing medical supplies, and consequently the distance that many people must travel to receive care.

Key Takeaways

Overall needs are likely to rise in this scenario, as more people are directly impacted by fighting, are displaced, and need support. However, as the ULA/AA's control expands, it may be better able to address needs, and trade (at least informal) may increase.

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	**Administrative risk**	**Physical access**	**Market functionality**
Permissions from the SAC are unlikely to meaningfully change in this scenario. The SAC is likely to completely restrict official access to any areas where it no longer has a presence, making direct access extremely challenging. However, permissions from the ULA and its HDCO may gradually increase, benefiting those responders willing to work with it.	The SAC will likely prohibit International responders from working with local partners, or engaging with the AA. Therefore, international organisations will be increasingly forced to circumvent 'official' rules in order to be effective.	Physical access will likely remain extremely challenging for international responders in this scenario, and more parts of Rakhine State will be difficult for even local responders to access. However, in places where fighting has stopped, local actors will likely have greater access than under the SAC, though security concerns will persist.	Market functionality is likely to degrade — in the short term — in parts of southern Rakhine State where fighting is ongoing, but to incrementally improve elsewhere. However, such functionality will be highly dependent on the ability to move goods and cash into the state from India and/or Bangladesh.

Key Takeaways

SAC permissions and physical access for international responders are likely to remain largely unchanged in this scenario, as the SAC will not allow the movement of any party in areas it has lost. However, local responders will likely be able to expand their reach in the state as SAC control recedes, and they will remain crucial partners.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN RAKHINE STATE SHOULD:

- Strengthen local partnership, and expand local partnerships to include smaller organisations based in northern, central, and southern Rakhine;

- Update internal analysis on key stakeholders best placed to navigate response activities, including non-traditional and private sector partners;

- Identify potential partner organisations based in Bangladesh, who may have greater access to northern Rakhine State;

- Develop an engagement strategy for key stakeholders, particularly the ULA's HDCO;

- Increase social cohesion programming and ensure that response activities do not discriminate between affected people from different communities;

- Work with the ULA/AA to ensure that its military activity, and evacuation and response measures, do not discriminate against Rohingya or other minority populations;

- Identify potential avenues to advocate to armed stakeholders on identified protection issues for IDPs and other conflict affected populations; and

- Allow project activities and budgets to be rapidly adjusted to address emergency needs and adapt to extreme market fluctuations.

Scenario 2:
Sittwe Becomes Battleground Within Six Months

LIKELIHOOD: ▮▮▮▯▯

This scenario comprises all of Scenario 1, as well as a major shift in the capital, Sittwe. In this scenario, the AA begins to fight actively in Sittwe town, entering from Ponnagyun. After pushing through SAC defences in the northeastern part of Sittwe Township, its members likely take multiple approaches: advancing along the main road toward the town; fanning out into villages, from which they relocate Rakhine civilians to central Rakhine State as possible; and taking up positions in Rohingya camps in the western part of the township. The SAC responds by firing heavy artillery, primarily from navy vessels (which can surround the township on three sides) and conducting airstrikes. To protect its positions and deter AA attacks, the SAC uses people in the town as human shields, and it sends Rohingya recruits to fire on the AA, with both measures resulting in difficulty protecting civilians — and increased civilian casualties. The SAC's forced relocation of villagers to the town, and the dangers and difficulties of escape, mean that many people remain trapped in the town, with growing numbers taking refuge in religious facilities. It is extremely challenging for civilians to escape until the AA is able to establish an overland corridor (without SAC presence) for them to do so.

Specific populations face additional challenges. Approximately 2,500 Rohingya people at the Basara camp, south of Sittwe airport, 1,000 Rohingya people in the adjacent Basara village, and Rohingya people living in Sittwe town's Aung Mingalar ward — where up to 10,000 people — have long faced movement restrictions, as have Hindu town residents to a lesser extent. Some of these people are able to flee to camps outside Sittwe town, thereby evading the most likely locus of fighting, but this provides little respite; these camps — where the majority of Rohingya in the township reside — and other villages are affected by commodity shortages, limited freedom of movement, and poor access to basic services including healthcare. As well, Rohingya communities in the township are likely increasingly pressured and coerced by both the SAC and the AA to cooperate with them, in the form of providing basic security and sharing information. Reprisals against Rohingya civilians for non-cooperation, or for cooperating with the wrong side, likely increase, as seen in northern Rakhine State.

Analysis

Local analysts have repeatedly told this analytical unit that the AA planned to attack Sittwe after clearing the SAC from Maungdaw Township, and it is one of few places that the AA has not captured in Rakhine State. Kyaukpyu will likely remain the last place fought over, and fighting is ongoing elsewhere, suggesting that it is only a matter of time before the AA turns its attention to Sittwe. The SAC appears to be expecting as much, and has increased its defences near Sittwe Township's one land border. In addition, there have been sporadic tensions along the border; at least twice in the past month, the SAC has engaged in shelling or airstrikes near the Sittwe/Ponnagyun township line.

At the same time, an assault on the SAC in Sittwe Township would be very costly for the AA, and it would very likely result in massive destruction of the state capital, affecting possibly 100,000 people. Many of these are people the ULA/AA relies upon for support, and they are also people who would likely need assistance, particularly if they are displaced to other parts of the state. Accordingly, it is possible that the AA could seek negotiation with the SAC in order to avoid fighting in Sittwe, as discussed in Scenario 3 below.
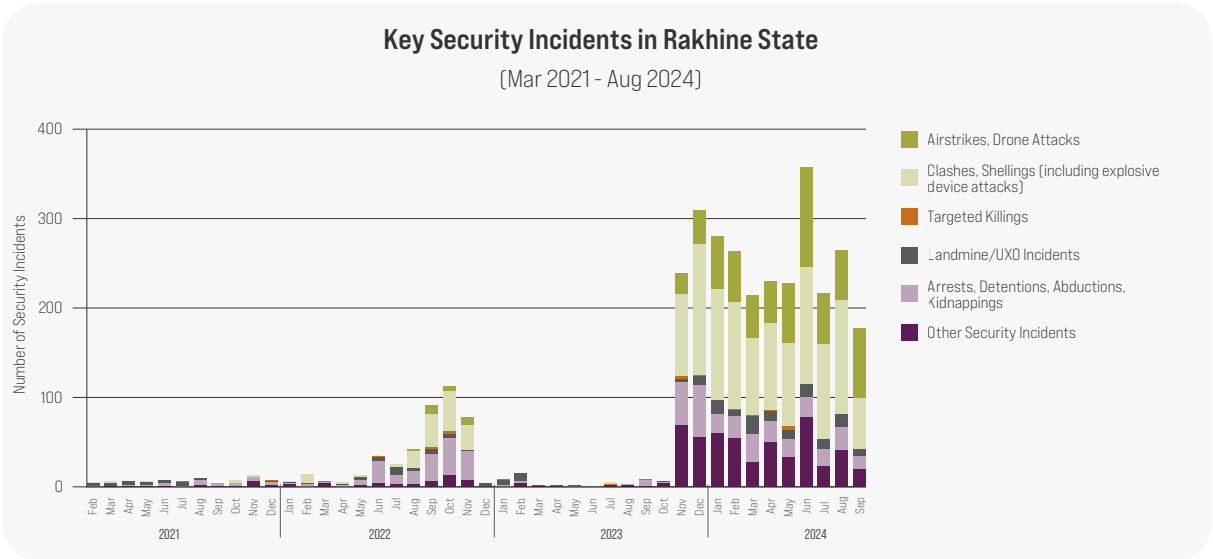
Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	**Food security**	**Protection**	**Livelihoods**	**Health**
Fighting would likely trigger large-scale displacement, but not before the AA is able to evacuate people in areas where the SAC no longer has troops. Furthermore, returns would be challenging in light of predictable destruction, especially in Sittwe town.	Economic conditions and food security are likely to be pushed from bad to worse, with electricity cut, markets destroyed, and an ever-shrinking number of smugglers able or willing to move goods into the township past SAC blockades. The displacement of Sittwe residents is also likely to add pressure on food supplies elsewhere in the state.	Protection is likely to worsen. In urban areas, a lack of bunkers raises vulnerability to ground and air strikes; in displacement camps, AA members may take positions, leading to targeting by the SAC. It is also possible that the SAC would use civilians as human shields; the likelihood of this is higher for Rohingya people in camps, where SAC troops are already stationed.	Livelihoods in Sittwe Township — already severely depressed by blockades, restrictions, shortages, and electricity cuts — can be expected to worsen in this scenario. As more and more of the township is overtaken by fighting, income opportunities largely vanish.	Key infrastructure within Sittwe town, including hospitals and clinics, would likely be damaged due to shelling and airstrikes, or otherwise compromised, leading to a lack of access to medical supplies and treatment. Meanwhile, it would likely be very difficult for township residents to seek care elsewhere.

Key Takeaways

Humanitarian needs are likely to rise dramatically in Sittwe Township in this scenario, as approximately 100,000 civilians are affected by fighting but cannot easily escape, an extreme shortage of goods leads prices to skyrocket, and places providing healthcare and other services are destroyed, damaged, or short on materials.

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	**Administrative risk**	**Physical access**	**Market functionality**
Permissions from the SAC are unlikely to meaningfully change in this scenario. The SAC is likely to completely restrict official access to any areas where it no longer has a presence, or where fighting is ongoing, making direct access extremely challenging.	The SAC will likely prohibit international responders from working with local partners, or engaging with the AA. Therefore, international organisations will be increasingly forced to circumvent 'official' rules in order to be effective.	Physical access will likely become even more challenging in Sittwe Township in this scenario, even for local responders. Of note, if the AA is able to seize territory near the Ponnagyun Township border, it may be possible to move goods into Sittwe town from there along smaller routes, but this would be dangerous. In addition, local responders that continue to conduct aid activities will likely face a high risk of detention.	Market functionality is likely to be severely impacted in this scenario, as destruction and security risks undermine physical marketplaces and continued blockades (and new security risks) also prevent goods from coming in.

Key Takeaways

While official permissions would remain largely unchanged in this scenario, physical access and market functionality in Sittwe Townships would be severely undermined, making it challenging for even local partners to provide humanitarian assistance.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN RAKHINE STATE SHOULD FOLLOW RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCENARIO 1, AND THEY SHOULD ALSO:

- Assess the feasibility of getting funds to local partners in Sittwe Township who can assist people in need, whether through the provision of materials, services such as healthcare, or otherwise;

- Position relief materials and service points in nearby parts of Ponnagyun Township, Mrauk-U Township, (and potentially Rathedaung Township, if people are able to escape by waterway) to assist people who are able to escape from Sittwe;

- Be prepared to address rising displacement of civilians from Sittwe Township, including with temporary shelters and WASH infrastructure; and

- Negotiate for pregnant women and other at risk groups (those with immediate health concerns) to be evacuated as a priority, where possible, to locations outside of Sittwe where access to healthcare remains possible.

Key Security Incidents in Rakhine State
(Mar 2021 - Aug 2024)

Legend:
- Airstrikes, Drone Attacks
- Clashes, Shellings (including explosive device attacks)
- Targeted Killings
- Landmine/UXO Incidents
- Arrests, Detentions, Abductions, Kidnappings
- Other Security Incidents

Scenario 3:
SAC and AA Agree to Ceasefire in Next Six Months

LIKELIHOOD: ▮▮▮▮ ▯▯▯▯

In this scenario, the AA and SAC negotiate their way to a ceasefire agreement. This may be facilitated by an external actor, as in the past. The terms of such a truce are impacted by the AA having taken control of towns, transport conduits, and territory across Paletwa Township and most of Rakhine State, but not yet taken the capital Sittwe or the most economically and politically sensitive location, Kyaukpyu. Accordingly, the terms would likely involve each party retaining the control they have at the time of the agreement, with the understanding (likely to be broken) that each side will not attack the territory of the other. However, sticking points in such an agreement include control over the borders with Bangladesh and India (and revenue from formal trade across these borders), as well as control over the Myanmar section of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Projects. Importantly, this ceasefire should not be seen as a resolution to tensions in Rakhine State. Such a truce is highly unlikely to address the key drivers of fighting, and is likely to merely put current levels of violence on hold; tensions between the AA and SAC remain, and continue to fluctuate.

Nonetheless, the agreement is a boon for Rakhine State residents, insofar as it puts a stop to active fighting, communications blackouts, and strict controls on the movement of goods between Rakhine State and elsewhere in Myanmar. However, the movement of people and goods between ULA/AA-controlled territory in Rakhine State and SAC-controlled territory in and outside Rakhine State may still be strained and subject to extortion, meaning that prices remain higher than elsewhere in Myanmar. Markets slowly become more functional, although restoration is challenging in areas that have been bombed out or otherwise damaged. SAC restrictions on humanitarian aid likely relax, but permissions remain cumbersome and challenging, with restrictions on access to areas considered sensitive. Humanitarian access, particularly to areas restricted by the SAC, depends on partnerships and coordination with the AA.

Analysis

Although a ceasefire may seem unlikely at a time of intense fighting and apparent AA military successes, bouts of fighting since 2018 have been halted by ceasefires that allowed the AA and SAC to consolidate their positions and forces or strengthen administrative functions. While there are few visible indicators of a new ceasefire announcement, the 2022 ceasefire in Rakhine State and the (short-lived) 2024 truce in Northern Shan State were both announced at periods of intense fighting, with few public indications of successful dialogue.

The impact of fighting on civilians has seemingly been one driver of ceasefires. The AA, in particular, is dependent on the Rakhine State population for ideological and material support, and is therefore cautious about imposing severe levels of hardship on communities. While this is particularly true of the ethnic Rakhine population, the AA's key support base, the AA also likely aims to lessen impacts on — and discontent among — other minority groups it seeks to govern.

As such, in this scenario, the AA would determine that the humanitarian cost of continued fighting outweighs the likelihood and benefits of further potential military success, beyond the significant territorial gains it has already made. The SAC, having lost large swathes of territory to the AA already, could view a truce as an opportunity to re-assess conditions in Rakhine, and reallocate resources to other fronts. Other factors may also drive the AA and SAC towards a ceasefire, including pressure from external stakeholders — such as China, which has several levers of influence over the AA and its allies, including on the flow of arms. Internal SAC dynamics, such as prospects of a leadership shift, could also alter the SAC's approach.

Impact

Humanitarian Needs				
Displacement	**Food security**	**Protection**	**Livelihoods**	**Health**
Some IDPs are able to return to their places of origin in rural and urban areas, but most remain displaced due to the destruction of property, inaccessible markets, or the presence of explosive ordnance.	As markets and trade routes reopen, communities can better access food. However, prices remain high as a result of the compounding crises across Myanmar.	Though the immediate protection concerns associated with armed violence lessen, civilians may remain concerned about the resumption of fighting. For Rohingya communities, there are greater risks from the SAC and the AA, as well as risks of intercommunal violence.	As markets open and travel becomes easier, livelihood opportunities improve. However, economic conditions remain weak, unemployment remains high, and significant numbers of people continue to seek work abroad.	Greater freedom of movement improves access to healthcare somewhat. However, healthcare facilities in areas taken by the AA are unlikely to operate at full capacity, as a result of destruction and limited access to resources. Access to healthcare is especially difficult for Rohingya people.

Key Takeaways

While humanitarian needs improve, they remain high as a result of the compounding crises across Myanmar and a legacy of conflict in Rakhine State. Moreover, recovery appears a distant prospect, as the drivers of conflict remain unresolved, and further armed violence is likely in the medium term.

Humanitarian Support			
Permissions	**Administrative risk**	**Physical access**	**Market functionality**
SAC permissions are likely to remain unchanged in case of a ceasefire, as they have remained unchanged across so much of Myanmar since the coup. For organisations based in Sittwe, direct implementation outside of Sittwe is no easier than before.	Visibility on projects is likely to improve somewhat as telecommunications are restored, which provides further opportunities for monitoring of activities. While still limited, conditions for financial transfers are eased as banks begin to operate in urban areas such as Sittwe.	Access improves for local responders in ULA/AA-controlled areas, as the threats of SAC airstrikes and shelling decrease. However, movement between ULA/AA- and SAC-controlled areas for the purposes of humanitarian activities is likely to remain highly restricted. Local partnerships are critical for reaching communities in need.	Relaxed restrictions and less fighting mean that markets can function better. However, markets take longer to be restored in urban areas where there was fighting, and also to be stymied by the destruction of transport infrastructure throughout the state.

Key Takeaways

While some improvements are likely following a ceasefire, direct access for international agencies is likely to remain extremely limited, as before the recent fighting in Rakhine State. Effectively reaching communities in need will likely involve a strategy of mixed modalities, through direct access in camps in Sittwe, and access through partners and remote modalities, including cash, particularly in areas under AA control.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN RAKHINE STATE SHOULD:

- Ensure that teams are well structured and prepared to negotiate access with both the SAC and AA following a ceasefire;

- Develop an engagement strategy for key stakeholders, particularly the ULA's HDCO.

- Ensure conflict sensitivity best practices are being continuously adapted to context shifts;

- Capitalise on any relaxing of the humanitarian space in Rakhine State to improve positioning when fighting resumes, including the pre-positioning of food items accessible for remote and hard-to-reach areas;

- Support local partners in conducting needs assessments in both SAC- and ULA/AA-controlled areas, keeping in mind that populations may shift;

- Strengthen partnerships with local actors, which will also be best placed to reach communities affected by conflict and crises when access is restricted again; and

- Maintain an awareness that a ceasefire does not mean a resolution to conflict in Rakhine State, but rather should be understood as a strategic pause.

Sub-Scenarios

AA Focuses on Eliminating Rohingya Armed Actors

LIKELIHOOD: ▮▮▮▮▯

In this scenario, the AA takes steps to eliminate threats posed by established Rohingya armed actors that primarily operate in Bangladesh. It likely does so primarily by securitising villages and border areas of northern Maungdaw Township — to prevent armed actors from moving unnoticed across the border — and heavily policing the movement, activities, and lives of Rohingya people. While many Rohingya civilians do not support — indeed, are often targeted by — these armed actors, the AA measures further increase protection and security concerns by exposing more Rohingya civilians to threats of arbitrary detention, abusive interrogation, extortion, and other abuses. Furthermore, the presence of AA members and likelihood of incursions in the northern part of the state makes it more likely that violence occurs in close proximity to communities. While Rohingya communities elsewhere in Rakhine State are less likely to see violence and intercommunal tensions, AA suspicions that these communities could be harbouring Rohingya armed actors may lead to more heavy-handed policing here as well.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN RAKHINE STATE SHOULD:

- Coordinate with partners in Bangladesh to monitor events on the border and share information to ensure updated analysis is available;
- Strengthen partnerships with civil society organisations and community-based organisations which work with Rohingya communities in northern Rakhine State which are well-placed to respond to the high levels of need among this community; and
- Explore opportunities to deliver cross-border assistance from Bangladesh to Rohingya populations in northern Rakhine State.

Tensions Increase in Paletwa

LIKELIHOOD: ▮▮▮▯▯

In this scenario, tensions increase between the AA and local communities in Paletwa Township, possibly leading to the intervention of the Chinland Council. The AA is accused of inflicting various abuses on local Chin communities, including forced recruitment and extortion, as its troops remain stationed there for military and economic purposes. Many people flee into Mizoram, in India next door. This, in turn, increases pressure on other Chin or Mizo actors, on both sides of the border, to engage in dialogue with the AA and push for safeguards. The AA's willingness to meet the demands of local communities and larger Chin stakeholders such as the Chinland Council is likely to be tied to: the scale and content of reporting on putative abuses; relations with the Chinland Council, as regards the AA's activity across southern Chin State; and the status of border trade with Bangladesh, without which cooperation with Mizo actors in India provides a crucial lifeline for the supply of goods into Rakhine State.

IN THIS SCENARIO, INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN RAKHINE STATE SHOULD:

- Implement social cohesion programming to mitigate ethnic tensions where possible; and
- Closely monitor local partner interactions and affiliations to understand the socio-political context of partner portfolios.

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Scenario Plan
RAKHINE STATE