

| INFOGRAPHIC |

WHAT HAPPENED WHERE

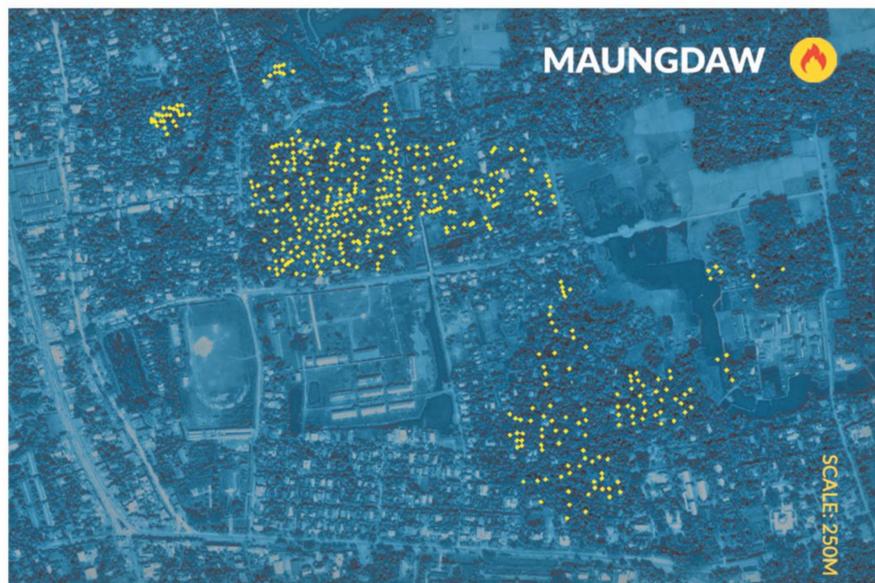
The routes in the map show the shortest possible distances Rohingya families needed to take to reach Kutupalong Refugee Camp.

For example, the longest distance shown here is from Rathedaung to Kutupalong (200km), which takes **40 HOURS** on foot without break. But some refugees took as long as **11 DAYS**, because of the mountainous terrain.

Myanmar government statistics claim that **6641 'BENGALI'*** HOMES were burnt up to September 5.
 *Rohingya



These satellite images based on Human Rights Watch data show that **450 HOUSES** in Maungdaw and **700 HOUSES** in Rathedaung were burnt as of September 2.



INFOGRAPHIC: ZYMA ISLAM & AMIYA HALDER

| OPINION |

The archetypal brown, bearded Muslim terrorist has a new face and a new badge—the loincloth-wearing, machete-wielding jungle guerilla of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).
On August 28, 2017 the government of Myanmar declared the ARSA a terrorist organisation, as defined by the country's counter-terrorism laws, officially nominating the armed group into the hall of fame of global terrorism (only Islamist ones of course).

indiscriminately", threw "mortar shells", and "dropped bombs".
That the rhetoric of the Myanmar government is different in spite of the fact that the actions were in all likelihood the same is no surprise. It needs to be called out nevertheless, because it is working. India already extended a hand of friendship to Myanmar in its battle against terrorists, when in a meeting with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to condemn the country's terrorism.

The war on terror's concerted effort to counter the establishment of Islamic states has valid claims seeing that this is a very real threat in many places in the world. At the same time, 16 years into the war, it has also proved itself to be intensely blind to the situations that breed radical militants in the first place. In spite of the fact that ARSA was the brainchild of a Saudi-trained Rohingya, it is manned by soldiers who do it out of a place of deprivation—and the latest round of conflict will probably only help that cause.

releases describing the type of weaponry recovered from the the fighting, their highest degree of sophistication is the long rifle. Even after that, the sheer inequality in the number of casualties begs this question: were these really face-on combats, or was it a witch-hunt? Is that what the war on terror looks like? Is that what all these countries of the world are signing up for?
ARSA is a real threat. This savage pushback from the government was purportedly carried out in response to an ARSA-led attack on border forces on August 25. In addition, ARSA launched this offense hours after Aung San Suu Kyi accepted recommendations of reconciliation from the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The body led by former Secretary-General of the

THE NEW "TERRORIST" IN TOWN

PROMY ISLAM

Since the conflict began on August 25, 2017 to last Monday when this piece was written, the Burmese State Counsellor Office Information Committee Facebook page published 44 statements headlined "ARSA Extremist Terrorist News". The content of most of these press releases were the same—claims of how many homes the ARSA burnt, how many "ethnic" people they've injured, and descriptions of the armed conflicts of which a large proportion they claimed were started by the "ARSA".

The official mouthpiece of the government has been making a great effort to convey the urgency of the situation—posting these news updates more than twice a day, as a matter of fact. Furnished with photos of scrawny machete-bearing men with blurred-out faces, and generic pictures of violence, these posts do a very effective job at creating the image of the "Muslim terrorist".

For example, this is what a post published on September 5, 2017 describing the initial spate of conflict read like: "In the morning of August 25, ARSA extremist terrorists made violent surprise attacks on 30 border guard police outputs, simultaneously, claiming security forces, government service personnel and innocent people with many injured."

On the flip side, this is how the post described the government's reaction over the subsequent days, "Security forces are performing the tasks of searching for terrorists and fighting against them, evacuating local nationals to safer places [...]".

Human Rights Watch too documented the government's reaction by interviewing Rohingya refugees, except the rhetoric sounded very different. The report quoted a teenager called Anwar Shah who said that "on the morning of August 27, Burmese security forces in uniform opened fire on a crowd in his village of Let Ya Chaung, killing three Rohingya men and a boy, and wounding 18 others." Other phrases regarding these men in uniform that featured in the report include "attacked", "shot



According to Myanmar official statistics, since the conflict began up until September 5, 371 ARSA terrorists were killed in combat—the Bangladesh-friendly term for which would be "crossfire". The number of military men who died? Thirteen. Even after that, the sheer inequality in the number of casualties begs this question: were these really face-on combats, or was it a witch-hunt?

Myanmar has also asked the same from China and Russia—in a statement, the National Security Adviser Thauung Tun claimed that the country is in talks with both China and Russia to veto a UN resolution as permanent members of the Security Council. Perhaps even more alarmingly for us, Bangladesh too has proposed joint military operations with Myanmar against terrorism, according to an AFP report citing an anonymous official present at a meeting between the country's foreign ministry and representatives of the Myanmar embassy.

According to Myanmar official statistics, since the conflict began up until September 5, 371 ARSA terrorists were killed in combat—the Bangladesh-friendly term for which would be "crossfire". The number of military men who died? Thirteen. The official statistics claim that this was the result of 97 conflicts between the terrorists and the military. It has to be acknowledged however that the ARSA terrorists are not furnished with the kind of modern arsenal that the national military would have at their disposal; according to press

United Nations Kofi Anan, and formed in 2016 upon Suu Kyi's request, urged the government to review the citizenship law, carry out capacity building in the region, and allow freedom of movement. The militant group allegedly attacked the border guards less than a day after a smiling Suu Kyi received a sheaf of papers containing these recommendations from Kofi Annan. The chronology of the events would suggest that ARSA is rejecting peace-making efforts. The Myanmar government has also been circulating pictures of Rakhine men and women with gaping machete wounds and news of Rakhine casualties and Rakhine communities displaced from their homes; all of which proves that two-sided communal violence did take place.

At the same time, responding to religious terrorism by inciting violence bad enough to drive away two lakh Rohingyas to Bangladesh is hardly helping push the cause of the government. The ARSA may be jeopardising security in the region, but they are not the ones causing what UN has called "textbook ethnic cleansing".