The issue of human rights, never far below the surface in South Asia, has once again been showcased in contrasting contexts: the world's largest democracy and one of the world's smallest dictatorships. In India and Myanmar, in other words.

In Myanmar, faces incarceration again, this time perhaps in one of Myanmar's most notorious prisons. The junta that rules Myanmar is utterly ruthlessness in its repression. But the circumstances that surround its fresh persecution of the pro-democracy leader smacks of a paranoia and arbitrariness that easily enters the surreal realm. Suu Kyi can hardly be held responsible for the breach that allowed the intrusion into her prison home of the American who swam across a lake evading the security dragnet. Clearly, he parked himself in Suu Kyi's home despite pleas from its occupants to leave. Nothing suggests that Suu Kyi or her companions in incarceration were party to the intrusion or that they were in a position to repel it – the charge of undermining the security of the regime would have been risible had it not been such a profoundly tragic commentary on Myanmar and the international community's indifferent toleration of one of the most brutal and, indeed, genocidal of regimes.

Myanmar's junta has for long been the target of international criticism. The condemnation of the regime peaked stridently last year in the global press, among civil and human rights groups and, in more muted fashion, in official forums when the regime refused to loosen its grip to allow relief work in the wake of a devastating hurricane. Earlier, too, criticism had mounted in the wake of a crackdown on protests triggered by hyperinflation. Unfortunately, this criticism hasn't amounted to anything because the international community is perfectly happy to do business with a murderous regime. To be singled out for encouraging the Myanmarese junta's delinquencies are the US, which only goes to war illegally to spread democracy when self-interest is at stake, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Asian superpowers, China and India, which are engaged in a high-octane race to clinch trade and investment deals with the junta without the merest mention of human rights, repression and ethnic cleansing. No surprise that diplomats throughout the world have remained silent about this latest outrage.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

For more [redacted] Burma, Congo, and Sierra Leone [redacted]