

Detained National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi has rejected her party's participation in the polls, but she is leaving the final decision to her party, said her lawyer, Nyan Win, after meeting Suu Kyi on Tuesday.

Speaking with *The Irrawaddy* after his meeting with Suu Kyi, Nyan Win said “Suu Kyi would not even think of registering under these unjust [election] laws.”

He said, “She wanted party members to know that the party would have no dignity if it registers and participates in the election.”



On Monday, the NLD Spokesman Khin Maung Swe said party members handed a letter to party Chairman Aung Shwe on Monday saying NLD central executive committee members agreed that the scheduled assembly of more than 100 party leaders on March 29 would leave the final decision to register the party to Suu Kyi and Aung Shwe.

The letter said party members would not follow the initial plan to have a secret ballot on whether the party should register on March 29.

The election law prohibits parties with members currently in detention, so a decision to register would force Suu Kyi out of the party.

Last week, 92-year-old Aung Shwe, who was a Brigadier General under the former dictator Ne Win, and some party leaders expressed their willingness to register the party, while other leaders stated their preference for party dissolution—which the party would face if it does not register—rather than expelling Suu Kyi and withdrawing the party's call for a review of the regime-drafted Constitution.

On Monday, the party issued a statement saying they had requested permission from the regime to have a meeting between Suu Kyi and her party central executive committee members in order that the NLD can continue its political functions. The statement also mentioned that the regime did not respond to a similar request first made on March 17.

Leading party officials Win Tin and Khin Maung Swe disagree on the registration issue—Win Tin thinks the party should not register while Khin Maung Swe thinks it should—yet both agreed that Suu Kyi should make clear her opinion on what the party should do.

The party leadership is currently under pressure from exiled opposition members and some influential individuals inside Burma not to register.

Last weekend, the renowned Burmese journalist Ludu Sein Win chastised the party, saying it has done nothing for the public during the past 20 years.

Sein Win said if the NLD decides to register—which requires the party leadership to vow that it would protect the junta's Constitution—then the party should make a public apology saying it was wrong for the party leadership to have walked out of the junta's National Convention and issue the Shwegondaing Declaration calling for a review of the Constitution.

The National Convention was held to draft the controversial 2008 Constitution and the NLD party decided to walk out following Suu Kyi's release from house arrest in 1995.

Analysts say there is little chance for the party to repeat another landslide victory in this year's polls without the endorsement of Suu Kyi.

But, Khin Maung Swe, who supports the party contesting the election, said the party can still become a viable force in the future parliament even if it cannot get outright victory in the election.

“Even if the political space in the future parliament is very limited, it is our duty to expand the democratic channel, even if it is just a crack, a crevice or a seepage,” he said.

Former political prisoners living in Rangoon said there is a lot of confusion within the party and among the public on what the party should do.

“Daw Suu was the main decision maker when the party decided to leave the regime's National Convention,” said a former political prisoner in Rangoon who wished to conceal his identity, adding that Suu Kyi has urged the people to “respond to unjust laws with unity and courage.”

In 1990, when the NLD was divided on whether to contest the election, Suu Kyi's decision to participate broke the gridlock and resulted in the NLD gaining an unexpected landslide victory, but the junta never acknowledged the results.

If the NLD party fails to register within 60 days from March 8 when the junta's election law was announced, it will cease to exist as a legal entity according to that law.