

The Burmese regime will not allow foreign election observers and international media to monitor the country's first election in 20 years, the chief of Burma's Election Commission (EC) said on Monday.



Burma does not need election observers but would invite diplomats and staff from UN agencies based inside the country to witness voting on polling day, said news agencies quoting Thein Soe, chairman of the election commission.

“The diplomats are representatives of their countries. So we assume that it's not necessary to allow other countries to observe separately,” Thein Soe said in a press briefing in Napyidaw, according to Agency France Presse.

Thein Soe also said no overseas journalists will be allowed into the country to cover polling since foreign news agencies already have staff based inside the country, adding that no photography or filming will be allowed inside the polling stations as this might prevent voters from “casting their votes freely.”

With less than three weeks to the parliamentary elections on Nov. 7, the Burmese regime retains tight control on the country and continues to detain more than 2000 political prisoners including pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Members of the pro-democracy parties contesting the election have formally complained about harassment by local authorities during their campaign tours, which the parties have had to conduct under the strict regulations of the junta-appointed EC.

They also said that the EC has taken no action against the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which they accuse of freely breaking election laws such as using state money to finance its campaigns.

Suu Kyi has decided not to vote although authorities have told her she is on an electoral roll, according to her lawyer. Suu Kyi cited this as an example of how the junta flouts its own laws—according the election law, all detainees are banned from membership of political parties and are not allowed to vote.

Meanwhile, Thein Soe said, “If you don't vote, you may lose your citizen's rights,” indicating another method the junta will use to pressure the electorate to participate.