

WASHINGTON—The restrictions imposed on foreign media and outside election observers on access to the Nov. 7 elections in Burma are “unfortunate” and a sign of continued rigidity of the country’s military rulers, according to the United States and the United Nations.

“It’s unfortunate but not surprising, given Burma’s track record in leading up to these elections,” State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley, told reporters on Monday.

“Obviously, we’ve already said that we don’t think that these will be credible elections, and the fact that they’re not going to open it up for outsider observers is par for the course,” he said, responding to questions about the junta’s decision not to allow anyone into the country to cover or monitor the election.

Crowley said the administration would have liked to see Burma “take advantage of the opportunity to have a more open election” as part of an effort to start a dialogue within civil society in Burma.

Deputy acting UN spokesman Farhan Haq said in New York: “The (UN) secretary-general has repeatedly called for the elections to be held in an inclusive, transparent, and free and fair atmosphere. And so anything that goes against that is naturally a cause for concern.”

“He has convened several different meetings on this, including one of the Group of Friends, just over the past month. And they came to an agreement again on this idea of the need for inclusive, free and fair elections. What further can be done on this, it’s difficult to mention at this stage,” Haq said in response to a question.

Meanwhile, a group of Burmese Buddhist monks who played a leading role in the 2007 Saffron Revolution called on the government of Canada and the Canadian Parliament to reject the Nov. 7 elections in Burma due to an unfair and undemocratic process.

Accompanied by the revered U Kawida, vice-chair of the International Burmese Monks Association (IBMA), two monks, U Pyinya Zawta and U Agga Nyanamet, with officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs (FAC) and attended a discussion hosted by Parliamentary Friends of Burma (PFOB) and its vice-chair Paul Dewar on Parliament Hill on Friday.

The monks requested Canadian officials to offer practical support for the setup of a UN Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma. Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon earlier had already pledged Canada’s support for the inquiry.