

Members of the disbanded National League for Democracy party (NLD) continued their election boycott activities despite the regime's threat of jail sentences on Saturday.



Referring to the boycott activities of the NLD, the regime media warned that those activities can amount to disruptions of voting and those responsible for the acts could be jailed for up to one year.

Undeterred by the warning, however, a group of NLD leaders in Rangoon continue their tour of several towns in Central Burma, spreading the message of their detained leader Aung San Suu Kyi that the Burmese people have a right not to vote.

“We will not decrease or stop our activities,” said Han Thar Myint, a central executive member of the NLD, speaking by phone from Yenanchaung, a city famous for its oil industry. “If we care about what the government said, we will not able to do anything.”

On Monday in Yenanchaung, he and a few other NLD leaders met with local party members, briefing them about the party's boycott stance against the Nov. 7 election.

“A boycott means that as NLD party members, we will not vote. Simultaneously, we will monitor the election and make complaints about irregularities on behalf of people,” he said.

Over the weekend, his group has already visited other towns such as Aunglan, Taungdwingyi and Natmauk. The meetings also included party members from nearby towns.

On Sunday, other NLD leaders also wrapped up similar tours to Mandalay, Chin State and the northern part of Shan State while other leaders are planning a trip to Myitkyina in Kachin State for the same purpose.

Suu Kyi urged the party to make the tours and the idea was implemented by party members, according to party Vice Chairman Tin Oo.

“We are not telling people not to vote. We are telling them that they can exercise the right not to vote,” Tin Oo said.

In the meetings, the party leaders have mostly met with party members instead of directly reaching out to the local public in order to avoid confrontation with the authorities which have not as yet taken any actions against them.

“We are explaining to people that this election will make no difference for the country. Under this Constitution the parliament cannot form a government. Only the president is empowered to form it,” said lawyer Aung Thein, a party member who came back for a similar tour from Chin State.

Former NLD members who formed the National Democratic Force (NDF) which is contesting the election expressed concern that these NLD activities could lead to a low voter turnout, making it more likely for the junta's proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), to win a landslide victory.

“If people don't vote, the parliament will be filled with USDP representatives. They [NLD leaders] don't know about that,” said Khin Maung Swe, a NDF leader and a former NLD leading member.

But the voter turnout is the focus of current NLD activities.

“Our aim is to effectively de-legitimize the election which can be achieved when less voters turn out,” said Han Thar Myint. “Whatever the impact of our activities, we will speak out for the people who should not take the injustices lying down.”