

RANGOON—The political party of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, which has opted out of the upcoming elections, said that the poll will only prolong military dictatorship and noted that citizens had the right not to vote, a party statement said.



The ruling junta has billed the election as a key step toward democracy after five decades of military rule. But critics say that oppressive rules governing campaigning, the repression of the main opposition party and the new Constitution insures that the military will continue its commanding role after the polls.

A statement by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), seen Tuesday night, said the election on Nov. 7 would merely activate a 2008 constitution which "does not guarantee ethnic rights, civil rights, basic human rights and other democratic rights."

The NLD's statement also called on voters to file complaints with police if they are coerced by anyone to vote.

Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize laureate still under house arrest, said earlier that citizens have the right not to vote and that forcing others to vote amounts to breaking the law. She has carefully avoided asking voters to take any specific action, evidently to avoid prosecution under broadly defined laws.

Her party won the last election in 1990 but was not allowed to take power by the ruling military, which has kept Suu Kyi jailed or under house arrest for 15 of the last 21 years.

The government dissolved her party because it declined to reregister for the election, widely expected to be won by the government-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party.