

“We are not a loser,” said Saw Than Myint, a Shan Nationalities Development Party (SNDP) candidate in Mogaung Township, Kachin State. “The government vote count says we lost the election, but we can show the international community that this was because of cheating and the unfair election procedures.”

Although Burma’s military regime has not yet officially announced the election results, unofficial counts and announcements have made it clear that the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won most of the seats in Kachin State with the help of rigged votes and unfairly obtained advance votes, according to local sources.

Township authorities and the Union Election Commission (EC) are now calling on “losing” candidates to sign a document recognizing the USDP victory.

“This morning at 3 a.m., the EC called and asked that we agree to recognize the advance votes they collected. Before this they called us to observe while they opened the advance votes, but we didn’t agree,” said Sai Maung Maung Aye, an SNP candidate for the People's Parliament from Hpakant Township, Kachin State.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Tuesday, Sai Maung Maung Aye said that neither the votes that he received nor the votes for National Democratic Force (NDF) candidate Buak Ja would top the advance votes received by the USDP candidate, former BSO 6 Chief Lt-Gen Ohn Myint, in Hpakant Township.

“I cannot accept the result of the election because I don’t think it was free and fair. I won’t sign the form recognizing the winner of the election,” said Mar Khar, an NDF candidate in Myintkyinar Township, Kachin State.

He said the USDP gave instructions to village authorities about collecting advance votes from the villagers and he is obtaining more evidence to use in a complaint he intends to file with the EC.

But Saw Than Myint did not have much faith that any complaint would bear fruit. “We have no authorities to inform about vote rigging because they [the EC] are in the same boat with the USDP,” he said.

Saw Than Myint was, however, able to see a silver lining in the bleak election environment.

“The election and the unfair election results will help us reunite our Shan ethnic people, who are spread across the country. This is the second way we can profit from the election even if we are not declared the winners. After the election activity is over, we will meet and discuss our plans for the future. I’ll work until our people can express their desire,” said Saw Than Myint.

The SNP was the largest ethnic political party competing in the election, fielding candidates in 156 constituencies, primarily in Kachin and Shan states.

The EC did not approve the application to contest the election by the Kachin State Progressive

Party (KSPP), led by Dr. Manan Tuja, the former Kachin Independence Organization vice-chairman. Tu Ja and other members of the KSPP also tried to compete as independent candidates, but those applications were also rejected.

The only Kachin ethnic party that the EC approved in Kachin State—the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin—has a close relationship with the USDP, said a local resident. Therefore, the SNDP, NDF and National Unity Party (NUP) became the main USDP opponents in Kachin State.