

Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), apologized to its supporters across the country on Tuesday for “the unsuccessful struggle for democracy” that it had waged for more than 20 years.



The public apology came in a three-page statement titled “*Appeal to the Public*,” which was released on Tuesday only in Burmese language. [

[Read full statement here.](#)

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“The aim of the statement is to officially apologize to the public for our failed policies in the struggle for democracy,” said Nyan Win, the main spokesperson for the NLD. “Nonetheless, we want to inform everyone that we will continue in our struggle to bring democracy to Burma.”

The statement included seven points describing the democratic reforms and policies that the NLD had attempted, as well as the persecution the party has faced during its 22-year campaign to bring about a civilian government in the country. It highlighted the military regime's refusal to recognize the NLD victory in the 1990 election, and the threats, arrests and intimidation its members, including party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, had been subjected to over the years.

“Even though we have tried in many ways to introduce democratic reforms and national reconciliation, we have gained no results under the regime's persecution. Therefore, we need to apologize to the public for our failure,” said Win Tin, a leading member of the NLD who spent 19 years as a political prisoner.

According to the NLD statement, the party has “stood alongside the people” since its formation, but its members have faced constant persecution, including arrest and imprisonment. The NLD could not succeed in its struggle for democracy due to unilateral oppression by the military authorities, the statement said.

The statement also mentioned the party's willingness to hold dialogue with the Burmese military to achieve national reconciliation. It said all its attempts were ignored by the Burmese authorities.

Even though the NLD had overcome many major restrictions and much suppression since 1988, it decided not to register for the general election this year due to “unfair and unjust laws” issued by the military junta, the statement said.

The NLD won a landslide victory in Burma's last general election in 1990, winning 392 out of 485 parliamentary seats; however, the regime refused to hand over power to the party.

In 2004, the NLD sent representatives to attend the National Convention near Rangoon with the aim of initiating negotiations with the junta; however, the aim failed, said the party statement.

In May 2003, party leader Suu Kyi and her supporters were attacked by junta-backed thugs in Kyee village, on the outskirts of Depayin Township in Sagaing Division, central Burma. She was subsequently arrested and has since lived under detention.

After the attack in 2003, all NLD branch offices were closed down.

In 2007 and 2008, the Burmese military government also arrested and jailed dozens of NLD supporters who took part in the Buddhist monk-led nationwide uprising in September 2007, as well as those who delivered humanitarian aid to victims and survivors of Cyclone Nargis. Many were handed down draconian prison sentences.

In August 2009, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Suu Kyi was handed down an additional 18 months house arrest when the junta said she violated the terms of her detention by sheltering overnight an American intruder, John W Yettaw, who swam across Inya Lake and sneaked into her house.

Despite being detained by the regime, Suu Kyi doesn't hate the junta, the statement said, and has repeatedly called for a dialogue with junta chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe for the sake of the country.

In her latest letter to Than Shwe in August 2009, Suu Kyi requested a meeting with the junta strongman to discuss the removal of economic sanctions imposed on Burma by Western nations. However, the junta chief ignored her request, the statement said.

In March, the NLD was faced with a political dilemma when the regime announced political party registration laws for the election that effectively bar Suu Kyi from participating. On March 29, the NLD announced that it had decided not to register for the election. The junta's electoral law states that a party that does not register before May 7 faces dissolution.

After May 7, the party will not stop working in the interests of its supporters, said Win Tin. He said the party will conduct social welfare activities, raise humanitarian aid at a grassroots level, and cooperate with its allies, such as ethnic leaders who are members of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament.

He said that the party will also continue to advocate its policies through media channels, as well as via the foreign diplomatic circle. The NLD will also launch lobby campaigns among the

people and call for a boycott of the election, he added.

According to NLD sources, if the party is dissolved on May 7, some NLD members may choose to take part in the upcoming election and will probably form a party to contest seats independently.

Khin Maung Swe, a spokesperson for the NLD who previously said he favored party registration, said that those who decided against competing in the election will be “more responsible” than others for the future of the NLD because of their decision.

“If the party is dissolved, it will be unable to perform as effectively as it did in the past,” said Khin Maung Swe, adding that the party may face worse oppression than before, which would weaken its activities.

The statement concluded that the NLD will continue to stand alongside the public, and will struggle systematically using all non-violent strategies at its disposal under the leadership of Suu Kyi.

Throughout its history, the NLD said it has focused on creating a democratic nation, human rights, national reconciliation, equal rights for ethnic people, and the formation of a developing nation. Its aims also included steps to prevent another dictatorship in Burma, the statement said.