

Burma's opposition Democratic Party (DP) has written to the Election Commission (EC) complaining of official intimidation after the EC passed the list of its members to the police Special Branch.



The DP submitted the list of its 1,400 members to the EC on July 28, and the EC forwarded it to the Special Branch. On Sunday, Special Branch officers visited DP offices and members' homes in Rangoon's Hlaing and Kyeemyindaing Townships and asked for CVs and photographs, said DP Chairman Thu Wai.

Thu Wai told *The Irrawaddy* on Wednesday that the DP had written to the EC on Monday to complain and appeal for a stop to "police intimidation."

"If they oppress and restrict democratic parties like us, they have more chance of a victory for pro-government parties, which otherwise have little chance to win the upcoming election."

Thu Wai is a former political prisoner who won a seat in the 1990 election. The DP was abolished after the election.

Among members attracted by the DP were Than Than Nu, Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein and Nay Yi Ba Swe, daughters of former well-known leaders of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, such as U Nu, U Kyaw Nyein and U Ba Swe.

The party applied in March for registration, which was approved in May.

Forty parties are currently registered to contest the election.

The EC's action in forwarding the list of DP members to the Special Branch was described on Wednesday by Bidhayak Das, an international observer with the Asian Network for Free

Elections (ANFREL), as a "ploy to prevent all forms of opposition to participate in the elections."

Das, a freelance political columnist, told The Irrawaddy: "This move is nothing but a clear indication of 'total control' by one section over another. It surely flouts all standards and basic norms.

"It sounds rather scary in a place like Burma if you have Special Branch people coming and knocking on our doors. Who knows what they are actually looking for?"

ANFREL, established in 1997, is a regional network of civil society organizations that strives to promote and support democratization at national and regional levels in Asia.