

RANGOON — Burmese authorities are keeping supporters of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu under constant surveillance, after the official dissolution of her party following its decision to boycott upcoming elections, its spokesman said Wednesday.



National League for Democracy spokesman Nyan Win said he and other party members are followed by at least three plainclothes officers on motorcycles wherever they go.

"I believe the authorities still view the NLD as a major political party," he said. "Even though we have declared that we will not participate in the elections, all the NLD leaders are placed under constant surveillance and closely watched."

At least one party that actually is contesting the election has similar complaints. Last month the leader of the Democratic Party filed a complaint with the Election Commission about police intimidation.

Police visited party members' homes in Rangoon and asked for personal data and photographs, said Thu Wai, the party's chairman. "This amounts to intimidation," he said.

The NLD won the last elections held in 1990 but was barred by the ruling military from taking power. It decided to boycott this November's vote as the regime's electoral rules barred Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest, and other political prisoners from taking part.

Party leaders met Wednesday to discuss the NLD's future, and senior members said afterward that Suu Kyi plans to file a lawsuit to contest the party's dissolution, which was formally announced by the regime on Tuesday.

The Election Commission said 37 other parties would take part in the vote and that campaigning can take place from Sept. 24 through Oct. 30, but parties must refrain from making speeches

that "tarnish the image" of the military.

Nyan Win maintained that authorities still view the NLD as a "major political party" and cited the "constant surveillance" of its leaders as sign of that.

He said Suu Kyi has instructed her party not to take down the party signboard or its party flag that features a "fighting peacock." She told members through the party spokesman that "she will never turn her back on the people or her struggle for democracy."

Burma has been ruled by its military for nearly 50 years. It says the election is a key step toward the transition to civilian rule, although a pro-junta party looks set to win and the constitution ensures that the military will control a chunk of seats in the new parliament.