

Ethnic Leaders Respond to NLD's Election Decision

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The National League for Democracy (NLD) made a historic decision to reject the registration of the party and not contest the junta-organized Burmese election sometime this year. The NLD could be dissolved after May 7, according to the Political Parties Registration Law recently enacted by the regime. The Irrawaddy interviewed ethnic leaders inside and outside the country regarding the NLD's decision.

"I am satisfied with the NLD decision because we already decided not to contest the election which we believe can't improve the rights of the ethnic nationalities under the 2008 Constitution. When the election laws gave the Election Commission more power to restrict the rights of the political parties, we should not stand as a political party under the Commission."

—*Aye Thar Aung, secretary of the Arakan League for Democracy*

"I want the NLD to continue to participate [in the election], but we can't tell them if they don't want it. In fact, the role of the NLD is gradually fading, and it will not be significant if they either go ahead or step back."

—*Shwe Ohn, a veteran Shan leader who will register his own political party*

"We support the the NLD's decision to deny the party's re-registration and think it is a decision that that the NLD should make. The NLD was elected by the majority of the people in the 1990 election, and we hope that Shan Nationalities League for Democracy will make the same decision. If the 1990 election winning parties don't participate in the upcoming election, there won't be an inclusive election."

—*Sai Lao Hseng, spokesperson of the Shan State Army-South*

"On behalf of Palaung State Liberation Front and the people of the Palaung, we wholeheartedly support the NLD's decision. This is the decision that we value for political change, national reconciliation and genuine peace and democracy of the people."

—*Mai Aik Phone, general-secretary of the Palaung State Liberation Front*

"The NLD firmly stands on its "Shwegondaing Declaration," and we welcome the party's decision. We can't accept the 2010 election because it is held in accord with the 2008 Constitution which doesn't guarantee the rights of the ethnic nationalities and the people. The election is only to prolong the rule of the military."

—*Zipporah Sein, general-secretary of the Karen National Union*

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