

Burma: Myanmar's Key Parties Reject Regime's Election Body Invites to Meet

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Yangon — The new Union Election Commission (UEC) formed by Myanmar's military regime has invited political parties to a meeting on Friday.

The invitation letter did not give an agenda and only asked the parties to say if they will attend.

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) told The Irrawaddy that the central executive committee decided not to attend the meeting.

The SNLD won 15 seats in the Union Parliament and 27 Shan State parliamentary seats in the November general election.

General secretary Sai Leik said: "The SNLD's political stance and objectives totally contradict the military council's actions."

He said it is too early to say whether the SNLD would contest any election arranged by the military, saying their political viewpoints are "totally different".

Sai Leik said the party accepted the voter lists for the 2020 election as accurate and legally sound.

The Kachin State People's Party (KSPP), based in Myitkyina, Kachin State, will attend following an intense debate within the party, said vice-chairman Gungrawng Awng Hkam.

"We decided to attend the Friday meeting because we can't say for sure there won't be an election. We have to think how our party can survive and represent the people," he said.

The KSPP said it only to listen to the military-appointed UEC but will not cooperate with the regime's State Administrative Council nor accept any council seats.

The KSPP won a Lower House seat and three Kachin State parliamentary seats in the November general election, which Myanmar's military refused to accept.

The Kayah State Democratic Party, which won five Union seats and three state seats, said it has not been invited and is unlikely to attend. The party is based in Loikaw, Kayah State.

"We will have a central executive committee meeting to decide whether to attend the meeting. We will also consult with other ethnic parties. But we are unlikely to attend. Attending will cause us political problems," said Khu Theh Reh, the party's general secretary

Amid protests against the military regime, the party's reputation will suffer and it will lose the people's trust if it recognizes the military's new UEC, said Khu Theh Reh.

The Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), a Yangon-based party, which has been joining anti-regime demonstrations, said it will not attend the meeting.

The Arakan League for Democracy said on Wednesday it will not attend Friday's meeting.

The military seized power in a coup on Feb. 1, claiming the November general election that brought a landslide victory to the National League for Democracy (NLD) was marred by fraud. The regime has been attempting to prove its accusations against the NLD and the election commissioners it appointed. The junta says it will hold a new election within a year.

The NLD has already declined its invitation to the meeting.

The military has detained numerous election officials across the country.

Of 93 registered political parties, over 30 parties, including the military-proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party, have supported the military coup. Most ethnic-minority parties in states and democratic parties in Bamar-majority regions refute the military's accusations of electoral fraud.

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