

Voices from Isaan: the impeachment of Yingluck Shinawatra

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People in Khon Kaen voice their opinions on the impeachment of former prime minister and Pheu Thai party leader Yingluck Shinawatra.

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KHON KAEN - Last friday, the National Legislative Assembly (NLA), a body hand-picked by the military government, voted with an overwhelming majority to retroactively impeach former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra over her role in the rice subsidy scheme. Ms. Yingluck is now banned from politics for five years and faces criminal charges that could lead to a 10-year prison sentence.

In Khon Kaen, people are divided over the impeachment of the former prime minister, but many expressed their approval of Pheu Thai's rice subsidy scheme. *The Isaan Record* talked to people in the city center about the NLA's recent decision. While some were reluctant to share their views on politics, most respondents eagerly voiced their opinions.

Nongnut Wiansri, a fifty-seven-year-old female market vendor says, "The process of the impeachment was not just. Yingluck was already bullied out of government, had to give up her position as prime minister, and now they continue trampling on her."

Speaking in favor of the rice subsidy scheme, Ms. Nongnut says, "The farmers are the backbone of the nation, right? But they don't receive enough support, and now without the rice scheme they have to sell their rice at a much lower price."

Atthaphon Chumwong, a twenty-seven-year-old police academy student from Maha Sarakham, disagrees. "As former head of state, Ms. Yingluck needs to take responsibility for the obvious flaws in the rice scheme. In my village, many people had to wait for a very long time to get paid; some didn't get paid at all."

He believes that the rice subsidy scheme was a good policy in theory but the execution failed. "The delay of payments caused farmers to lose money. The government should have had a better plan," Mr. Atthaphon says.

Nearly all respondents agreed that the process of Yingluck Shinawatra's impeachment was unfair and exposed deep flaws in Thailand's justice system.

Maliwan Thamsimma, a thirty-seven-year-old female market vendor, wonders, "I've never really believed in the justice system. From my experience, when people like me have to go to court, they hardly ever receive justice. And how can they, when even the former head of state is not treated fairly?"

[For more thoughts from Khon Kaen on the impeachment of Yingluck Shinawatra, click through the slideshow above.]