

# [Voices from Isaan: the failed constitution draft](#)

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KHON KAEN - Despite their relief about the rejection of the constitution draft, people in the Northeast are dismayed by the undemocratic drafting process and the prospect of extended military rule.

On Sunday, the military-appointed National Reform Council (NRC) voted down the charter draft that the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) had been writing for almost a year. According to [Prachatai](#), at least 85 million baht (about \$2.35 million) was spent on the entire process.

In Khon Kaen, people support the rejection of the draft constitution, but criticize the delay of a return to electoral democracy. [In March](#), people in the city voiced their skepticism of the drafting process and some called for a return to the 1997 constitution. This sentiment was echoed by many when *The Isaan Record* talked to people at the city's new bus terminal about the failed constitution draft.

"I just got the news and I am so happy that it was rejected," said soft-spoken Sirilak Phonsuwan, a 60-year-old rice farmer from Sakon Nakhon. "It just wasn't a good constitution and we grassroots people and farmers would not have benefitted from it," she said, describing herself as "grassroots" despite Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's [insistence](#) to replace the term with "people with little education."

Surasak Baojanya, a 53-year-old veteran and security guard at the city's new bus terminal also agrees with the rejection of the charter. "It was not democratic anyway, and they were drafting it only for themselves and not for the people. I was a soldier myself but I am not agreeing with what they are doing now," he said.

He criticized the high number of constitutions that Thailand has gone through without ever becoming a full democracy. "It might be a good idea to go back to the 1997 constitution and amend it, that'd be more democratic. We don't need another drafting council, what we need are elections," he said before raising his hand in a military salute.

Retired civil servant Thanatat Satanakho also favors a return to the so-called "People's Constitution." "Whatever they can come up with, it won't be more democratic than the 1997 constitution," he said. "And there still is no reconciliation, the country is as divided as ever. I see more problems in the future with this current government," he added.

Another retired civil servant, Wanna Koetsiri agrees with the rejection of the charter but for different reasons. "If we had elections now the old politicians would come back," the 67-year-old said. "I want new politicians and not the ones who started this whole mess. That's why we need to reform the country first. It might take quite long, maybe two years," she added before walking away to buy a bus ticket to Bangkok.

"I want them to set up a new drafting council but it shouldn't take them longer than 6 months to write a new constitution, said 21-year-old Phompichaya Phiriya-anatakun, a Local Administration

student at Northeastern University in Khon Kaen. "Thailand is a weak democracy, and I want it to grow stronger soon," she added.

Most interviewees agreed that the state funds used for the drafting process were poured down the drain. "It was a waste of time and resources to set up this drafting committee and then reject the charter," said retired teacher Surasak Samroeng.

"I want Thailand to become a fully developed democracy without this never-ending cycle of coups. People are sufficiently educated for a democratic system," he added.