

Kenyan doctors strike over pay and training extends into third week

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Kenyan public hospital doctors who have been on strike since last month convened in two major cities on Tuesday, 2 April 2024, to discuss their grievances against the government.



Source: Reuters.

The Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union (KMPDU), which represents over 7,000 members, went on strike on Friday, 15 March to demand payment of their salary arrears and the immediate hiring of trainee doctors.

The arrears arose from a 2017 collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the union said. Doctors are also demanding the provision of adequate medical insurance cover for themselves and their dependants.

It also wants the government to address frequent delays of salaries and to start paying doctors who work in public hospitals as part of their higher degree courses.

The minister of health, Susan Nakhumicha has said the government cannot afford to hire the trainee doctors due to financial pressure on the public kitty.

The Kenyan health sector, which doctors say is underfunded and understaffed, is routinely beset by strikes.

Talks between the two sides aimed at ending the ongoing strike have so far not borne any deal and other health workers, such as clinical officers, have also joined the doctors in the strike, domestic media reported on Tuesday.

"The strike will take as long as it takes the government to wake up," Onyango Ndong'a, chairman of KMPDU's branch in the western city of Kisumu, said on *Citizen Television* ahead of the rallies by the doctors.

The doctors have held a number of protests in the streets of the capital and other major cities since the strike began.

A previous strike in 2017 lasted three months and some doctors in individual hospitals downed their tools at various times during the Covid-19 pandemic to protest lack of personal protective equipment and other grievances.

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