

UK junior doctors plan more strikes as talks with government over better pay fail

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In this file photo, junior doctors hold a strike amid a dispute with the government over pay in London (Photo by Reuters)

London, May 29 (RHC)-- Junior doctors in England are planning to stage more strikes in June after negotiations over a pay rise with the government collapsed without a solution. The union representing junior doctors said on Monday that the new strikes will put more pressure on the country's already strained state-run National Health Service (NHS).

According to the British Medical Association (BMA), which represents about 45,000 junior doctors in England, the industrial actions are scheduled for June 13-17. It also threatened in its statement that strikes could continue throughout the summer if the government did not change its position.

The new strike plan came after tens of thousands of junior doctors already staged two rounds of walkouts this year to demand wage increases. They want the pay rise to match the country's all-time high inflation, which as of last month was still running into double digits.

The government has said such pay rises would only intensify inflation, pushing up interest rates and mortgages.

Based on the BMA criteria, junior doctors are those who are qualified in clinical training. They must also have up to eight years of experience working as a hospital doctor or up to three years in general practice. They work under the supervision of a senior doctor.

Up to a quarter of a million medical operations and appointments could be postponed due to next week's four-day strike planned by tens of thousands of doctors in England, while putting seriously ill patients at greater risk, the NHS Confederation has warned.

Strikes by the UK's healthcare workers have also included walkouts by nurses and ambulance workers. Together, they have led to the cancellation of numerous appointments, disrupting patient care at a time when millions are waiting for treatment. "These [new strikes] will be hugely disruptive for patients and put pressure on other NHS staff," a government spokesperson said in a statement in response to junior doctors' latest strike plan.

The spokesperson added that the government is ready to continue pay talks if strikes are called off.

The BMA, for its part, said the government's latest pay offer of a five-percent increase for 2023-24 is not a credible offer since it is "nowhere near addressing pay erosion over the last 15 years."

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