

Nearly 100,000 British nurses begin first ever strike amid dispute over pay

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?British nurses hit the bricks on Thursday and next Tuesday. (Via GETTY)?????

London, December 15 (RHC)-- Around 100,000 nurses have gone on strike in their first ever national walkout as the government has ruled out negotiations over pay raises. The strike, which has canceled thousands of operations and outpatient appointments, ramps up pressure on already-stretched hospitals at one of the busiest times of year.

British nurses have demanded a 19% pay rise, however, the government has said it cannot afford to pay more than the 4-5% offered to nurses, which was recommended by an independent body. It said further pay increases would mean taking money away from frontline services. The nurses are to repeat the industrial action on Tuesday, December 20th.

"It is deeply regrettable some union members are going ahead with strike action," said health secretary Steve Barclay. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has, however, said the strikes are inevitable as nurses are struggling to make ends meet. The RCN has also accused the government of "belligerence." It had said as late as Tuesday that the strikes could still be stopped if the government was prepared to negotiate.

Britain is facing a wave of industrial action this winter amid the highest inflation and worst cost-of-living crisis in generations, with strikes crippling the rail network and postal service, and airports bracing for disruption over Christmas.

The inflation reached a 41-year high of 11.1 percent in October on soaring energy and food bills. Last month, food costs rose again, with shop prices of groceries rising over 12 percent higher than a year before. Polling ahead of the nursing strike showed that a majority of Britons support the action.

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