

UK govt will impose contracts on doctors to end strikes

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Britain's government said Thursday it would impose new contracts on junior doctors to force an end to strikes over changes to their working conditions.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt told the House of Commons that the decision had been taken after negotiations with doctors' union the British Medical Association (BMA) failed.

The announcement came after nearly three years of negotiations and the day after a second 24-hour strike led to nearly 3,000 operations being postponed in England.

Hunt said he would be "proceeding with the introduction of a new contract" seen as "safer for patients and fair and reasonable for [junior doctors](#)" on the recommendation of the chief of the government's negotiating team.

Junior doctors are recently qualified doctors often aged in their twenties and thirties who work in the National Health Service (NHS) while completing their professional training.

Hunt said they would now receive a 13.5-percent increase in basic salary which he insisted would lead to three-quarters getting an overall pay rise, despite a lower pay premium for working on Saturdays under the new contracts.

He also announced a review on how to improve morale among junior doctors.

Prime Minister David Cameron's centre-right government argues that the reforms are needed to help create a "seven days a week" NHS where the quality of care is as high at the weekends as on weekdays.

Johann Malawana, chairman of the BMA's junior doctor committee, said they "cannot and will not" accept the contract and would "consider all options open to us".

"Junior doctors already work around the clock, seven days a week," he said.

"If the government want more seven-day services then, quite simply, it needs more [doctors](#), nurses and diagnostic staff, and the extra investment needed to deliver it."

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