

# Kenyan doctors sign deal to end crippling 100-day strike

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Kenyan doctors signed a deal on Tuesday to end a strike over pay and working conditions that has crippled public hospitals for 100 days.

The government had threatened repeatedly to fire the strikers and hire foreign [doctors](#), and union officials were even briefly jailed in a bid to end the country's longest-ever medical strike.

Poor salaries and working conditions—such as a lack of vital drugs and equipment—have pushed Kenyan doctors to flee the public sector or go to other countries where there are better opportunities.

The deal, signed at a ceremony broadcast on television, followed intense negotiations brokered by religious leaders.

"We have concluded a return-to-work formula between the government and ourselves bringing to an end the strike by doctors that has consumed the country for 100 days," said Ouma Oluga, the head of Kenya's main doctors union, the KMPDU.

"It has been one of the most difficult industrial relations in the country", he told a joint news conference with Peter Munya, the chairman of the Council of Governors, which comprises the heads of the 47 counties.

No details were released on the accord, but Munya said they have not yet concluded a pay deal.

"What we have signed today with the doctors' union officials is a return to work formula that will pave way for further negotiations on the pay increase demands", he said.

He described the strike, which began on December 5 in state hospitals, as "one of the most painful experiences for Kenyans".

At the root of the strike was a Collective Bargaining Agreement agreed between the government and the unions in 2013.

The document promised to triple salaries but also to improve often dire conditions in public hospitals—which the striking doctors point to when accused of being greedy.

The KMPDU union says the country has one doctor to 17,000 patients, while the World Health Organization recommends one to 1,000.

The government said the CBA was still being fine-tuned but doctors had argued it was a legal deal which they wanted implemented immediately.

A furious President Uhuru Kenyatta last week lambasted the some 5,000 striking doctors, accusing them of "blackmail".

University lecturers also went on [strike](#) in January, a double blow to Kenyatta's government just five months before a general election.

A series of corruption scandals—including in the health ministry—are fuelling the discontent, as is anger towards lawmakers who are among the best paid in the world and have voted themselves new benefits while claiming to be unable to meet the demands of doctors and lecturers.

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