

Mali doctors' strike paralyzes hospitals

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A nearly week-long strike over pay in Mali's public hospitals has brought services in major cities to a near standstill.

The strike, which began on March 9, has affected hospitals and clinics in the capital Bamako and three other cities, sources said.

Consultations were cancelled Wednesday at Bamako's Gabriel Toure Hospital, one of the country's largest, although essential services appeared to continue to be available, AFP journalist saw.

A couple who had taken their baby to the hospital said the child was unable to get the necessary care.

"Our child is sick. He needs blood, but because of the strike, it's difficult," the man said.

Union officials and witnesses said the strike was also being observed in the central cities of Segou and Mopti, as well as in Gao in the north.

"The [strike](#) action is being followed, but we are still offering essential services," Gao [union](#) official Mamoud Maiga said.

The stoppage was called by the country's two main health unions, demanding raises for staff and jobs for contract workers, union officials said.

The doctors and nurses are also calling on the state to ensure 100 percent

healthcare coverage for medical staff, one official said.

A health ministry official told AFP that "the state does not have the means to meet the strikers' demands".

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