

Portuguese doctors launch two-day strike

May 10 2017

Portuguese doctors launched a 48-hour strike Wednesday to protest at working conditions and budget cuts, with only minimum healthcare being offered at public hospitals nationwide.

"All signs show strong turnout for the [strike](#)," Diana Povoas, a leader of the National Federation of Doctors told AFP, without providing figures.

"Most non-emergency surgeries and appointments are not taking place, but the atmosphere is calm in hospitals. Patients understand the reasons for the strike because they also feel a decline in services."

The public health system employs 26,000 [doctors](#) across the country.

Minimum healthcare services will be ensured during the strike, which has been organised by the federation and another doctors' union known as SIM.

Doctors are seeking a reduction in work hours for emergency workers from 200 hours a year to 150. They are also calling for the withdrawal of [budget cuts](#) decided by the former centre-right [government](#).

"The government changed but the policies remain the same," said FNAM head Mario Jorge Neves.

In power since November 2015, Portugal's socialist government has scrapped some of the main austerity measures put in place between 2011 and 2014 that were part of a bailout deal with the EU and IMF, but it is

still seeking to balance its budget as required by creditors.

The doctors' strike will end the day before Pope Francis starts a two-day pilgrimage from Friday to the holy site of Fatima in central Portugal.

Public healthcare services will continue to function with reduced staff levels on Friday, however, because government workers are allowed to attend the pope's visit.

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