



International Council of Nurses deplores low pay and dismissal of nurses in Zimbabwe

Geneva, 6 November 2020 - The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is gravely concerned about the situation of nurses in Zimbabwe as they continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to nurses' protests over low pay, and despite an agreement between the two parties, Zimbabwe's Health Board Services have removed over 1,000 nurses from their pay sheets and are instituting disciplinary hearings.

Enoch Dongo, President of ZINA, wrote to ICN, saying, "We are at a crossroads. Never has the right of the worker been at more threat than it is now. We are struggling and pained to understand why the government would do this to its own employees, all of whom are enduring serious difficulties just so they can come to work. We have been advised of our legal options and we are currently seeking instructions from our members regarding how they would want us to proceed. "

Mr Dongo has reported that nurses' salaries are so low that some cannot afford food or transport to work.

ICN is in regular contact with the Zimbabwe Nurses Association (ZINA), an ICN member, and expressed its support to the association and its many members. ICN has urged all parties to respect the agreement and explore options to find a mutually agreeable solution.

ICN Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton said:

"In April of this year, ICN President Annette Kennedy wrote to Zimbabwe's President, His Excellency Emerson Dambudzi Mhangagwa, about our concerns, and called for negotiations to agree a way forward. Now we are reiterating our worries about what seems to be an increasingly grave situation, with nurses having their pay withheld and being subjected to disciplinary procedures.

'At this time, everything should be done to retain valuable nursing staff in the jobs they love doing, and to attract a new generation of nurses into the profession. ICN, representing the world's 27 million nurses, stands in solidarity with the nurses of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Nurses Association. We hope for a speedy resolution to the current problems, and a return to normal relations and working practices as soon as possible."

ICN believes that nurses have the right to organise, to bargain collectively, and to take industrial action. (See ICN [position statement on Industrial Action](#)). It also expects nurses to have equitable remuneration and decent working conditions, including a safe environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ICN continues to advocate for the protection and prioritisation of nurses.

The [State of the World's Nursing report](#), on which ICN CEO Howard Catton was a Co-Chair, released earlier this year revealed a shortage of almost six million nurses, highlighting the need to recruit and retain nurses in order to meet current and future needs. Investment in the nursing profession is vital to the health of populations and good for economies. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the nursing workforce is the bedrock of preparedness and strong health systems.

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