MPs ask govt to urgently act on doctors' demands

By Paul Kiwuuwa

Legislators on the Parliament committee on government assurances have asked the Government to urgently address the demands of striking medical doctors to end the strike that is paralysing health services in the country .

The committee chairperson, Hussein Kaps Fungaroo, the Obongi County MP, said government's failure to address the doctors' demands soon may lead to more disastrous effects.

The committee is mandated to scrutinise the assurances, promises and undertakings given by ministers and other agents of government in Parliament and report on the extent to which they are implemented.

The first negotiation attempt by the Cabinet committee instituted on Monday to convince doctors and end the strike hit a dead end.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

The doctors want government's written commitment and assurances that it will honour its promises to increase the medical allowances in phases.

Fungaroo's call was supported by the Nakaseke South MP, Semakula Luttamaguzi, who said the medical workers are asking for an increment which they are entitled to, in addition to a conducive working environment such as medical equipment, protective gear, and necessary medicine to offer services to the increasing number of patients.

Led by their vice-chairperson, Prof. Pauline Byakika Kibwiika, Uganda Medical Association (UMA) leaders yesterday appeared before the committee to explain their stand on the strike.

UMA said they want government's written commitment and assurances that it will honour its promises to increase the medical allowances in phases.

"The Government may not have all the money in a lump sum, but we want government assurances that it will increase our allowances by 50% in the current financial year 2017/2018, also in 2018/2019 give another 50% increase, and another increase of 50% in 2019/2020 until our request is met," Byakika told the committee.

"We are working in very bad conditions, which exposes our lives to more sicknesses because the hospitals lack the necessary medical supplies, hospital equipment, including the current information technologies for human operations. Sometimes many patients die in our hands due to lack of necessary drugs and other supplies," Byakika said.

"We are here for a legitimate cause. We earn peanuts, while ministers cruise in air-conditioned four-wheel drives, they live in posh houses, yet hospitals do not have gloves, they lack electricity and essential medicines. How do you expect a midwife to attend to a mother giving birth using a candle or torch?"

The UMA secretary general, Dr Mukuzi Muhereza, reminded the committee that the late Iganga Woman MP, Hailat Grace Kaudha, died of Preeclampsia at Kawempe Hospital. He said this is a common condition during pregnancy where there is a sudden rise in blood pressure and swelling, which could have been prevented if the hospital had the necessary equipment and medicine?

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