



OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ECUADOR

Eco Rafael Correa Delgado, Constitutional President
Dr Carina Vance, Minister of Health
Republic of Ecuador

The Health Services Task Force, composed of leaders of health sector unions affiliated to the Public Services International (PSI), an international federation representing more than 20 million workers worldwide, had a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. The Working Group would like to express its deep concern about the situation of health sector workers in all professional and occupational categories in Ecuador, regarding:

1. **Arbitrary and untimely dismissals.** In a sequence of events starting in October 2011 and continuing in the first months of 2012, workers throughout the country have been dismissed, without recourse to any legal administrative procedure other than implementation of Executive Decree 813 of 2011 and use of the unconstitutional procedure of “compulsory redundancy”. We have had reports that many of these dismissals were accompanied by intimidation and physical violence in a joint operation conducted by the police and Ministry of Labour officials.
2. **Weakening of public health services.** Among the dismissed are specialised doctors (neurosurgeons, pulmonologists, geneticists, immunologists, cardiologists), head nurses responsible for patient care and other professionals who have not been replaced by staff of the same level of training and experience. During implementation of the dismissals, some services were suspended, including operations, which had a serious effect on patients. Furthermore, inadequate health emergency services in this period caused avoidable deaths.
3. **Increase in working time for health sector professionals.** This has resulted in a break with the San Salvador Protocol; shifts of more than 12 hours; and unsafe and dangerous working conditions contrary to dignity at work.
4. **Outsourcing/concession of services to the private sector.** Various services previously provided by the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute (IESS) and public sector hospitals have been privatised. The companies taking over these services are paying their employees low wages and not observing their human rights. The dismissal of more than 200 unionised workers at the Baca Ortiz Hospital in Quito on 30 March has been justified on the grounds that the services in question were to be contracted to the private sector.

5. **A policy designed to weaken professional associations.** Membership of professional associations is no longer obligatory; institutions will no longer deduct voluntary membership payments by members at source; leaders of associations have been dismissed; associations have been stopped from participating in staff selection processes; and a campaign of intimidation is being waged against all professionals by subjecting them to performance appraisals.

For the reasons expressed above, we call on the government of Ecuador to halt these mass dismissals, stop this attack on the freedom of association and stop the destruction of public health services. We request the immediate reinstatement of the dismissed workers. We also invite you to begin a social dialogue with trade unions and professional associations in the sector, with the participation of the ILO, with a view to identifying mutually acceptable solutions regarding the political reform and strengthening public services and the right of Ecuadorians to have access to quality public services.

AYUBA PHILIBUS WABBA

Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria
Nigeria

IRENE KHUMALO

Swaziland Nurses Association
Swaziland

JUDITH KIEJDA

New South Wales Nurses Association
Australia

ROSNI AZIZ

Malayan Nurses Union
Malaysia

ASHOKA ABEYNAYACA

Public Services United Nurses Union
Sri Lanka

MARIA APARECIDA GODÓI DE FARIA

Confederación de Trabajadores en Seguridad Social
Brazil

LINDA SILAS

Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions
Canada

HELENÉ LEBRUN

Centrale des Syndicats du Québec
Canada

RÉGINE LAURENT

Fédération interprofessionnelle de la Santé
Du Québec, Canada

LINDA HASLAM – STROUD

Ontario Nurses' Association
Canada

Public Services International is a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 150 countries. PSI champions human rights, advocates for social justice and promotes universal access to quality public services. PSI works with the United Nations system and in partnership with labour, civil society and other organisations.

HEATHER SMITH

United Nurses of Alberta

Canada

HELENE DAVIS – WHYTE

Jamaica Association of Local Government Officers

Jamaica

CLAUDIO GONZÁLEZ JARA

Federación Nacional de Profesionales

Universitarios de los Servicios de Salud

Chile

JUAN DANIEL MONROY MONROY

Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores del Sistema
de Seguridad Social en Salud “ASOSISALUD”

Colombia

RODRIGO LÓPEZ GARCÍA

Asociación Nacional de Profesionales
de Enfermería

Costa Rica

CANDICE OWLEY

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

USA

DEBORA BURGER

National Nurses United

USA

ZENEI CORTEZ

National Nurses United

USA

KEN ZINN

National Nurses United

USA

IVAN ANGELOV KOKALOV

Federation of Trade Unions- Health Services

Bulgaria

MARJA-KAARINA KOSKINEN

The Union of Health and Social
Care Professionals

Finland

MARYVONNE NICOLLE

Fédération Santé-Sociaux

France

ABUDULKARIM YUSUF RADHI

General Federation of Bahrain

Trade Union

Bahrain

SAMIA LETAIEF BOUSLAMA

Fédération Générale de la Santé

Tunisia

20 April 2012

Public Services International
Health Services Task Force Meeting

International Labour Office, Geneva Switzerland

Public Services International is a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 150 countries. PSI champions human rights, advocates for social justice and promotes universal access to quality public services. PSI works with the United Nations system and in partnership with labour, civil society and other organisations.