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On April 29, registered nurses employed in 27 hospitals and over 300 clinics throughout the island nation launched a strike demanding resolution of salary reclassification problems and an end to the federal government hiring freeze. Patients defined as "not critically ill" were sent home. In statements to reporters May 1, Health Minister Easton Douglas said negotiations would not proceed until the strikers return to work. As of May 4, the nurses were still on strike. On the same day, court employees protesting government delays in settling salary claims participated in a work stoppage which effectively shut down the nation's criminal justice system. On May 6, a spokesperson for the Nurses' Association of Jamaica (NAJ) told Inter Press Service that government and association negotiators had thus far failed to reach an agreement on eliminating "anomalies" in salary levels. Association member are upset over the government's decision to single out 27 of their number for a special 100 Jamaican dollar allowance. (US$1 = 24.5 Jamaican dollars) Health Ministry officials say the allowance was mandated to bring the salaries of the 27 in line with those of grade one physicians. These nurses have administrative responsibilities. The NAJ rejected the government's explanation, asserting that nurses will not return to work until the Health Ministry adjusts their salaries according to the scale specified in the current Administrative Reform Program (ARP) spearheaded by the Public Service Ministry. Nurses went on strike in September 1991 to demand salary hikes. At the bottom of the scale, a level one nurse earns between US$1,747.26 and US$2,076.93. A level nine nurse at the top of the scale earns from US$4,867.79 and US$5,786.28. (Basic data from Chinese news service Xinhua, 05/01/92, 05/04/92; Inter Press Service, 05/06/92)

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