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Chile: Public Health Sector Employees On Strike

by Barbara Khol

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On July 25, at 8 a.m., 55,000 employees at 198 public hospitals and clinics launched a strike, after the collapse of talks with government officials. The National Health Workers Federation (FENATS) demands a 50% salary hike for the 35,000 lowest-paid health sector employees, who currently earn between 16,000 and 30,000 pesos ($47 to $87) per month. FENATS has also requested that pay scales pertinent to other public employee categories be applied to health care workers. According to Health Minister Jorge Jimenez, the increase would require the government to spend $100 million per year. He described the strike as a "sterile confrontation." The minister said the government plans to submit a bill to the national congress within the next 60 days that would bring health sector employees under the same pay scale system as other civil servants. This "definitive solution," he added, will be retroactive from Aug. 1 this year, and completed in 1992 and 1993. (Basic data from Notimex, 07/25/91)

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