



**New Zealand Resident
Doctors Association**

**PRESS RELEASE
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“It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

“Doctors in England are fighting to save lives while it seems the UK Government is only interested in saving face” says Dr Sara Moeke, President of the New Zealand Resident Doctors Association.

Having promised to deliver 7 day a week NHS care (something the NHS already does) the UK Government has found itself in the unprecedented and untenable position of trying to force through non negotiated changes to the doctors’ employment contract.

“This disregard for the fundamental right to agree (or disagree) with the terms of a contract is as dangerous as it is disingenuous” says Dr Moeke. “It is dangerous because it will, by any reasonable analysis, result in more fragmented health care from a more overworked and stressed medical workforce. It is disingenuous as the current situation of doctors striking is entirely within the Government’s power to resolve. It simply needs to put its pride aside, put people and patients first, and return to the negotiating table with a contract offer that respects the medical workforce in England. If the Governments in Wales and Scotland can do it, then so it must be done in England.”

In New Zealand, resident (junior) doctors have fought similar battles in past years. When confronted by Government moves to unilaterally undermine our conditions of employment, NZ doctors were able to maintain the security of sustainable, fair employment conditions by remaining cohesive as a group and – when it came to it – going on strike. These strikes were only taken as a last resort as it is extremely difficult for any dedicated health professional to withdraw services to patients.

Emergency and life threatening care was maintained by senior colleagues (consultants), and where this cover needed augmenting, the resident doctor's union (NZRDA) agreed to provide cover in negotiation with affected health boards. This provided the public, hospitals, and ourselves with reassurance, whilst at the same time forcing the necessary changes to the untenable proposed terms of employment. "In those difficult times we all had to take the longer term, greater good point of view" says Dr Moeke. "Looking back now, the decision to strike was and remains the right one. New Zealand's health system is better off as a result of the stand we took."

The stand Junior Doctors take today in England, will affect the future of the NHS. By continuing to believe that a sustainable health workforce is essential for a sustainable health system, they are fighting for what is right; for doctors, for patients, for people.

ENDS

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