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Portugal-Britain

# Portuguese nurses in solidarity with the NHS nurses strike

- News from around the world -

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**125 nurses from Portugal have signed an open letter of solidarity with the unprecedented strike that, since 15 December, has been promoted by British colleagues in response to more than a decade of disinvestment in the public service and the loss of real wages.**

Recalling that many of these striking nurses are their fellow citizens, the signatories stress that some of the problems underlying the protest are similar to those nurses face daily in Portugal and call for the strengthening of nursing as a way to defend the quality of healthcare and the NHS itself.

In addition to dozens of nurses directly involved in care provision, both in the public, private and social sectors, the professionals signing the open letter include, individually, leaders and former leaders of the three largest nursing unions, leaders of the Ordem dos Enfermeiros (Portuguese Nurses' Association) who have held positions in different directorates and members of academia.

This initiative transcends political, trade union or geographical barriers, with the aim of mobilizing solidarity with NHS professionals and underlining that the struggle for decent working conditions is common and fundamental for nursing to fulfill its mission: providing quality healthcare.

### **First signatories**

Mário André Macedo (specialist nurse); Maria Augusta Sousa (President of the Nurses' Order 2007-2011); José Carlos Martins (National Coordinator of SEP - nurses' union); Lúcia Leite (National Coordinator ASPE - nurses' union); Carlos Ramalho (National Coordinator SINDEPOR - nurses' union); Guadalupe Simões (National Coordinator of SEP); José Carlos Gomes (Nurse Educator ESS-IP Leiria); Lucília Nunes (Nurse Educator ESS-IP Setúbal) Manuel Lopes (Nurse Educator Évora University); Leila Sales (Nurse Educator Portuguese Red Cross); Rui Carlos Santos (ex-Coordinator SEP); Maria José Pinheiro (President of AESOP - nurses' association); João Fernandes (President of APE - nurses' association); Ana Alves de Brito (ex-presidente of the general assembly of the Nurses' Order); Luís Mós (South coordinator SINDEPOR); Graça Machado (vice Presidente of the Nurses' Order 2016-2017); João Quintela (Supervisor CHULC- main Lisbon Hospital); Armandina Antunes (ex-Diretor Nurse at CHULC, main Lisbon Hospital); Bruno Noronha Gomes (ex Nurses' Order leadership); Fernanda Lopes (Coordinator SEP in Aveiro region) Gonçalo Cabral (ex-candidate to the presidency of the Nurses' Order); Isabel Gonçalves (director at USF-NA);

## **NHS nurses, an already historic example**

*Published in Publico, national daily paper*

On the 15th and 20th of December, nurses in the UK staged their first national strike in the 74-year history of the National Health Service (NHS), in response to more than a decade of disinvestment in the public service and real loss of purchasing power. Around 100,000 professionals joined the protest. This was an unprecedented response to disinvestment in the public service, a demand to reinforce teams (without which the provision of quality care will be compromised) and a protest against the 10% drop in real salary in ten years.

Many of the strikers are Portuguese nurses like us, pushed towards emigration after disinvestment in Health in Portugal. We salute the struggle of our NHS colleagues, compatriots or not, and we wish them success. The reasons

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for this historic standstill are not unknown to us: every day we feel the disastrous effects of disinvestment in the public health service, the inadequacy of ratios or the loss of wages (which in Portugal reaches an unbearable 20%).

All of us subscribe to the need and urgency of mobilizing nurses to save the Portuguese NHS. We also demand constructive reforms and respect. We want to work with safety and dignity. Our careers must be reviewed and progressions must stop being a mirage. We deserve more conditions to reconcile our profession with family life. As in the UK, nursing can be a powerful agent of change and evolution in the NHS, making an essential contribution to increasing accessibility to healthcare. Thus, we demand political action for change.

*PS:*

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