



AMERICA/PANAMA – Doctors on strike stop the country, the mediation of the Church is requested

Panama (Agenzia Fides) - The Democratic Revolutionary Party (DRP) has called for the intervention of the Catholic Church in Panama to mediate in the conflict between the government and doctors who have been on strike for nearly 15 days, in order to repeal law 69 which authorizes the employment of foreign doctors . "Today we want to ask the Archbishop of Panama, His Exc. Mgr. José Domingo Ulloa and the Church to offer themselves as mediators between medical associations and the government, so as to put an end to the strike of doctors that affects hundreds of thousands of Panamanians" is what is said in a statement by the candidate for presidency and secretary general of the DRP, Juan Carlos Navarro. The note sent to Fides Agency informs that Navarro has spoken out against law 69.

The directors of the National Medical Commission for the negotiation, which organized the strike, have expressed a willingness to speak directly with President Martinelli to find a solution to the problem and have refused invitations from the Ministry of Health and Social Security Fund to begin the implementation of the law.

The representatives of the Catholic Church have not yet given an official response to the request. Meanwhile, about 18,000 patients have been unable to carry out any medical examination. The concern of more than 5,000 doctors on strike is that, with this law, one wants to gradually privatize the health service. According to the latest report of the Ministry of Health of Panama, the government is already working on the curriculum of 22 doctors (from Spain, Cuba and the Dominican Republic) willing to work in Bocas de Toro, Cocle, Darien, Colon, Los Santos y Herrera.

According to the latest information, the government has promised to increase scholarships and salaries to doctors who choose to work in the inner area of the country, and this would be the main reason, according to the government, regarding the approval of Law 69 . In the last hours the teachers' unions have joined the request to repeal the law, but without calling a strike. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 10/10/2013)