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Doctors Syndicate threatens legal action against Prime, Health Ministers

By Menan Khater

The Doctors Syndicate sent two injunctions to Health Minister Ahmed Emad and Prime Minister Sherif Ismail in an attempt to force the government to adhere to a court verdict that would increase the compensatory payments the government issues to doctors who become infected while working in state-run hospitals.

In late November 2015, the State Council issued a verdict that raised the compensatory payment of infections from EGP 19 to EGP 1,000.

Mohamed Shawky, the syndicate lawyer told Daily News Egypt that the ministry has not taken any steps to implementing the appreciation in compensatory payments since the verdict was issued, adding that the syndicate was not informed about any issues or concerns hindering the verdict's implementation from the ministry's side.

The Doctors Syndicate have provided the aforementioned officials eight days notice from the date of receipt of the injunction to begin the procedures. "If we receive no response, the syndicate will file a lawsuit against them which subjects them to suspension from their positions and arrest", Shawky said.

According to Shawky, the verdict is final as it was issued from the State Council and, even if any appeals were issued against it, it still has to be implemented until the court decides on the appeal. Furthermore, any civil servant who does not implement a court verdict will be arrested, according to the law.

The syndicate submitted the injunctions to the court which is

expected to deliver them to the officials. This is a long process, according to Shawky; the syndicate has not received confirmation of receipt.

The Ministry of Health was not available for comment.

However, Emad reportedly said, during an inspection at Nasr Gastroenterology and Liver Centre in late November, "the ministry will start examining the verdict implementation mechanism", affirming his support for the increase.

He also reportedly commented on the verdict in early December, saying that the Ministry of Finance is the entity that must proceed with the decision.

The verdict followed condemnation from Doctors who demanded that compensatory payment for infections be raised after Doctor Dalia Mehrez, 28, died in Ismailia from meningitis she contracted while working in early November.

Mehrez is among at least 30 other cases of doctors who have been infected with deadly viruses during their work in 2014, according to the Doctors Syndicate's census. The syndicate attached the profiles of the cases in the trial documents. The rate of infection is believed to be much higher.

In a recent visit by Daily News Egypt to Qasr Al-Ainy hospital, Chief Nurse Hanan Abdel Meguid said about 99% of the nurses working at the hospital had contracted the Hepatitis C virus during their work.

The Ministry of Justice allowed an increase in compensatory payment paid to judges in the case of infection in May 2015 to approximately EGP 3,000 monthly.