

# Edo health workers' strike claims 10 lives

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**O**VER 10 persons, including a nurse, had as at yesterday died following the three-week-old strike embarked upon by health workers in Edo State.

The strike is taking its toll on facilities at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) and other Federal Government health institutions in the state as hundreds of patients are now finding it difficult to get bed space for treatment.

As at yesterday, there was no government representative at the peace meeting called by the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity to broker peace between the workers and the state government.

The workers are demanding that the state government pay the new salary scheme for health workers as approved by the Federal Government. No reason was given for the state government's absence. The industrial action has paralysed activities in all state government health institutions.

Addressing the press yesterday, a coalition of civil society groups urged the state gov-

ernment to enter into negotiation with the state health workers to save citizens who cannot afford treatment in private hospitals.

Speaking on behalf of the civil society groups, which included the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the Trade Union Congress (TUC), One Love Foundation, African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEL), the Gani Fawehinmi Movement for Good Governance and Foundation for Good Governance and Social Change, Austin Osakue said the groups did not believe in the hard line posture of both parties, saying that there was need for them to meet for the sake of the suffering masses.

"Since the strike started, innocent citizens of the state have suffered untold hardship as they are unable to access hospital facilities in Edo State. In spite of the arguments of both parties, we simply do not believe that taking the hard line will bring our people the desired succour and to prolong this will place a moral responsibility we must explain to our generation and those yet unborn," Osakue said.