

Health service chief quits, cites interference by Finance Secretariat

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'Pernicious interference' puts agency's services at risk, warns Germán Martínez



The chief of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) announced his resignation today, citing budget and staffing cuts at the agency and other “pernicious interference” by the Secretariat of Finance (SHCP).

In a letter directed to the technical council of IMSS, Germán Martínez said that meddling by the SHCP posed a risk to the institute’s capacity to provide health services.

“I want to say it as clear as I can and as I must: some officials from the Secretariat of Finance have a pernicious interference in IMSS and place at risk the egalitarian vocation . . . of providing health services,” he wrote.

“The president of the government of Mexico proclaimed the end of neoliberalism but at IMSS some interferences from the Finance Secretariat are of a neoliberal essence: savings and more savings, staff cuts and more staff cuts . . .” the letter continued.

“Excessive savings and controls in health spending are inhumane,” the official wrote, adding that the country’s poor are most affected by them.

Martínez said that IMSS needs a “great legal reform” in order to integrate it into a universal health care system but charged that “some finance officials are attempting a cosmetic restructuring.”

While discussions about the restructuring of IMSS takes place, many of the institute's employees have no job security and staff vacancies are on the rise, Martínez said, adding that delays in health infrastructure projects are "brutal" and the supplies of medicine "precarious."

Martínez, a former national president of the National Action Party (PAN), is the first cabinet-level official to resign in the government of President López Obrador.

IMSS, which manages public hospitals in Mexico and is also responsible for paying pensions and running other social programs, is one of the government's biggest spending departments.

The president, whose administration has implemented cost-cutting measures across a range of departments, told reporters that he regretted Martínez's decision to step down but added "fortunately, there are very good public servants in the team and we're going to replace him."

López Obrador defended the cost-cutting measures at IMSS and asserted that the provision of its medical services is not at any risk.

"The Secretariat of Finance has to take care that there is no deficit . . . that the finances are healthy, that's its role and I support that policy . . . [IMSS] is an institution that works and it's going to continue working without any problem . . ."

Source: [Reforma](#) (sp), [El Economista](#) (sp), [Milenio](#) (sp)