

**Statements read by nurses Fe Vinoya and Beryl Otieno Ngoje at press conference
Danquah v. University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey
11/14/2011**

Fe Vinoya:

Good afternoon. My name is Fe Vinoya and I am a nurse in the Same Day Surgery unit in the University hospital. Many of my colleagues are working now so they were unable to attend. But all 12 of us have dedicated our lives to helping patients. However, in October we were suddenly confronted with a choice between our faith and our jobs. We come from different backgrounds but we all have the same conviction that we do not want to help in the killing that happens in abortion.

Our managers told us very clearly that all Same Day Surgery unit nurses must immediately begin training in and assisting abortion patients, including all aspects of those patients' care during their visit. They did this in spite of our repeated effort to tell them we had religious and moral objections. They said very clearly that if we did not assist we would face termination. There are only a handful of these cases every week, and for years the hospital simply paid nurses who were willing to do it. But in October they began forcing us to train to assist these cases, one or two nurses at a time, every Friday and sometimes on Wednesdays. I, and all of us, were told we would be scheduled to assist these cases as soon as possible.

Several of us were forced to work these cases on Friday October 14, 21, and 28. Sharon was not even told until she showed up for work on October 28. She expressed her objection before the cases began, but the assistant manager told her that the hospital has no regard for her religious convictions and that she must assist. Then, even after we filed our lawsuit, the hospital scheduled Lorna and Julita to work the cases on November 4. The hospital's attorney told our attorney that Lorna and Julita were "required" to assist parts of those cases even though they objected. Not until our attorney asked the court for an emergency order did the hospital concede that it would stop forcing us to assist, but only for a few weeks. Our attorney has repeatedly asked the hospital to agree that we will not be forced to assist abortions and related services if we have religious or moral objections. But the hospital has said it will not assure us that. The hospital has said it will not withdraw its requirement that we assist these abortion cases. And the hospital has said it will fight to lift the Court's order in a few weeks so that we are no longer protected from the hospital's command that we assist abortion cases.

The hospital has made statements to the media, saying that they don't compel anyone to violate their religious beliefs, but this is false. I myself and all 12 of us have been told we must assist abortion cases even though we object. Several of us have been forced to assist already despite objecting. We and our attorneys have repeatedly asked the hospital not to force us to provide services on abortion cases, and the hospital has repeatedly said it will not back down and that we are required to assist.

No nurse should be forced to violate her religious or moral beliefs in order to keep her job. Nursing is a healing profession, and the law protects our right not to provide any services related to abortion. We are thankful that the Alliance Defense Fund and Mr. Stratis are standing by our

side to protect our rights. For a few weeks at least, we can sleep soundly at night knowing that we also will be respected in our right to choose not participate in killing innocent lives.

Beryl Otieno Ngoje:

Good afternoon. My name is Beryl Otieno-Ngoje and I am a nurse in the Same Day Surgery unit in the University hospital. I was shocked when our supervisors began telling us in October that we had to assist with abortion cases in violation of our religious and moral beliefs, or we would be subject to termination. I am a nurse so I can help to heal people, not help to kill. No health professional should be forced to choose between assisting abortions or being penalized at work. I and the other nurses have a legal right not to assist with abortion cases. I joined this lawsuit because supervisors at University hospital said that they would require me to train and to assist abortion cases in the upcoming weeks. The hospital has never changed that requirement, except for the temporary court order. The hospital is not speaking truthfully to the media when it says that it does not compel nurses to violate their beliefs. Supervisors have explicitly told us we are required to assist abortion cases against our beliefs, and we have asked the hospital to change its position but they refuse to do so. The only thing stopping University hospital from again planning to make me to assist abortion against my beliefs is the court order in this case, and the hospital plans to fight that order. I am grateful that the Alliance Defense Fund and Mr. Stratis have come to our aid in this case. The hospital should not be allowed to break the law, or to violate my legal right not to be forced to help kill babies in the womb.