

## Doctors Call for Fair Hearing After Jalandhar Hospital Suspension



The Punjab government's suspension of three doctors and dismissal of a fourth from a Jalandhar civil hospital has ignited controversy, with one of the suspended physicians questioning the fairness of the government's investigation. The disciplinary action, announced by State Health Minister Dr. Balbir Singh, follows a preliminary inquiry into the deaths of three critically ill patients on July 27, which was linked to a disruption in the hospital's oxygen supply.

According to government officials, the investigation found "gross negligence" and "administrative failure" on the part of hospital staff. However, one of the suspended doctors, Dr. Sunakshi, a consultant anesthesiologist, has formally appealed to the Punjab Civil Medical Services (PCMS) Association, stating she believes she has been "unfairly targeted and made a scapegoat." Her letter suggests that the situation is "far more complex" than the public portrayal and calls for a thorough, transparent investigation that considers all contributing factors, including "systemic failures" and "infrastructure limitations."

The incident occurred when a technical fault in the hospital's oxygen plant caused a drop in supply. The deceased were a 15-year-old snakebite victim, a 32-year-old drug overdose patient, and a 30-year-old patient with a lung disease, all of whom were on ventilators. The probe revealed that a contractual ward attendant, a non-technical employee, was overseeing the oxygen plant at the time, not a trained technician.

Dr. Raj Kumar, the suspended Medical Superintendent, also expressed concern, telling reporters that the doctors' pleas were not heard before the disciplinary action was taken. In response, the PCMS Association has announced the formation of its own independent fact-finding committee, which will visit the hospital to conduct a separate inquiry. This move signals a deep-seated concern within the medical community about the government's process and the potential for front-line medical staff to be held responsible for broader systemic issues. The outcomes of both the government's ongoing inquiry and the independent PCMS investigation are now keenly anticipated.