



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Chinese media say Tibetan dies fighting COVID-19 outbreak

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Chinese state media are reporting that a Tibetan man died from “overwork” this week after fighting to prevent the spread of the coronavirus outbreak.

Azi Lhundup (Ch: Azhen Nengzhou) was found dead on March 15 in a resting room in the Sichuan Hongyuan No. 1 Police Station, where he was an official, the Chinese media said.

The 30-year-old Tibetan was from Khyungchu (Ch: Hongyuan) county and was reportedly deployed in prevention work in a Tibetan area of Sichuan, in western China.

“On the day before his death, he had been working continuously for 24 hours,” the Beijing News, a Chinese language newspaper, said.

Unanswered questions

The reporting of Azi Lhundup’s death appear to be an attempt by China to present a Tibetan poster boy for the campaign against coronavirus. China annexed Tibet, a historically independent country, in 1959 and continues to rule over it with an iron fist.

Months after the eruption of the coronavirus pandemic, Chinese authorities have yet to provide figures for the number of Tibetan casualties. Despite this, official Chinese media reported in detail about Azi Lhundup’s Tibetan nationality and his membership in the Chinese Communist Party.

This seems to be an attempt to spread the narrative of Tibetans supporting the work of the Chinese government up to the point of sacrificing their lives, without any verifiable information about the cause of Azi Lhundup’s death, the reasons why he was “overworking” and whether that was his voluntary choice.

Chinese propaganda

Similarly, Chinese state media have also been putting an official propaganda spin on the donations made by Tibetan monasteries and nunneries to areas of China affected by the outbreak.

Chinese state-run Tibetan language media have reported on the Chinese government’s attempts at framing the monasteries’ and nunneries’ humanitarian initiative as though the religious fraternity had “diligently responded” to the “appeal” of the government to contribute to the prevention of the pandemic, therefore promoting the propaganda idea of “Loving the country and loving the religion.”

By doing this, Chinese state media try to present the compassionate and humanitarian actions of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in Tibet, as being driven by the Chinese government and in service of the promotion of Communist ideology -- an ideology whose aim is to totally control monastic institutions and to stifle religious freedom in Tibet.



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