



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **COVID in Tibet: Tibetans say dismissal of three officials merely symbolic**

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Chinese authorities in Tibet's capital of Lhasa have dismissed three officials in the health bureau amid a botched response to a COVID-19 outbreak there. However, Tibetans tell the International Campaign for Tibet the dismissals are not meaningful.

State media reported on Aug. 14 that Fan Yueping, Party Secretary and Deputy Director of Lhasa Municipal Health Commission; Tseten Dolkar, Director of Lhasa Municipal Health Commission; and Amik, Party Secretary of Lhasa Center for Epidemic Control and Prevention, have been dismissed "due to the inadequate implementation of the new coronavirus epidemic prevention and control work."

Earlier, on Aug. 12, it was announced that five officials from Shigatse (Chinese: Xigaze) were dismissed for similar reasons.

#### **Lack of accountability**

Tibetans in Tibet, however, see the dismissal of officials as symbolic and lacking in meaningful accountability for the COVID outbreak in Tibet.

Observers in Tibet told the International Campaign for Tibet that the dismissed officials will return to government using their deep connections once the state propaganda apparatus normalizes the COVID outbreak in the minds of the public.

Until the recent outbreak, there had been no reported COVID cases in the Tibet Autonomous Region—which spans about half of Tibet—since 2020, though there have been COVID-positive cases in other Tibetan areas.

The current outbreak comes at a sensitive period leading to the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party scheduled for some time in October, when General Secretary Xi Jinping is expected to get an unprecedented third term in office.

Since COVID cases in Tibetan cities are expanding, with cases also being reported from Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the dismissals in Shigatse and Lhasa could be an attempt to prevent the pandemic from leading to any social and political unrest.

#### **Seriousness of the situation**

As an indication of the seriousness of the situation, the authorities in Lhasa have extended the citywide "disinfection" operation that was to end on Aug. 15 until Aug. 18.

In the latest public announcement, Lhasa authorities also extended the partial lockdown until Aug. 21. During this period, no public gathering is permitted, and people are not to go out unless there is an emergency.

In Shigatse city, where there has been an extended lockdown, authorities announced an extension of the “silent management” period until Aug. 21. The authorities described the measure as an effort “to further prevent hidden transmission, eliminate hidden risks, and effectively protect the lives and health of the people.”

Similar lockdowns were imposed in Shanghai recently during the surge in COVID cases there. Shanghai residents were defiant in expressing their views on the daily hardships they faced during the extended lockdown.

However, a similar expression of views by Tibetans in Tibet would most likely be portrayed as political, and the Tibetans would be prosecuted for endangering stability and attempting to overthrow the Chinese regime in Tibet.



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