

Siberian Official Fired Over Disputed Coronavirus 'Body Bags'

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There is disagreement over what the photographs show. tomsk.mk.ru

A Siberian health official has been fired after controversial photographs went viral showing alleged coronavirus victims in body bags, regional authorities [said](#) Thursday.

A pro-Kremlin tabloid published photographs Monday [showing](#) a room full of black bags that it claimed proved a higher than reported Covid-19 death toll in the Tomsk region. The regional crisis center said the bags contained household waste and the journalist who published the story faced charges of abusing freedom of the media.

Tomsk Governor Sergei Zhvachkin dismissed the regional chief of healthcare Alexander Kholopov for “an organizational mess” in the wake of the scandal, the governor’s office announced.

“How could outsiders enter a closed medical facility?... Why can’t any of the medical officials explain the situation clearly?” Zhvachkin was quoted as saying.

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Zhvachkin said a special commission is trying to establish whether photographs of the alleged body bags at the Tomsk city hospital morgue are real.

“No one is allowed to mock the dead,” he said.

The Tomsk region, with a population of slightly over 1 million, had officially confirmed 2,846 coronavirus cases and 22 deaths as of Friday.

A total of 713,936 coronavirus cases and 11,017 deaths had been officially registered in Russia as of Friday.

Russia has faced questions over its relatively low coronavirus death rate despite having some of the world's highest number of cases.

Officials attribute Russia's low mortality figures to mass testing and thorough autopsies determining the exact cause of death.

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