

## Mbeki condemned for firing health official

by UPI

PRETORIA, South Africa -- President Thabo Mbeki's firing of a deputy health minister has brought condemnation from AIDS activists in South Africa and across the world. While Mbeki says that he dismissed Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge because she took an unauthorized trip to an AIDS conference in Spain, her supporters say she lost her job for criticizing the government's failed policies, The Independent of South Africa said. Mbeki, early in his tenure, endorsed unscientific theories about the cause of AIDS. Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, a close ally, has suggested that AIDS can be treated with garlic and grape juice. Sandra Botha, a leader of the Democratic Alliance Party, accused Mbeki of trying to undermine Madlala-Routledge. "Unfortunately, alongside the women who have made us proud, are others who are letting us all down," she said. The trade union federation COSATU and the Rural Doctors' Association of South Africa also praised Madlala-Routledge. Some overseas were even more blunt. "It seems the government of South Africa is determined to discredit itself in the eyes of the international community," said Stephen Lewis, a former U.N. special envoy on AIDS.

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