



Editorial

A human rights victim?

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Why on earth would the State Department believe the Chinese account of injuries suffered by an American scholar arrested in Tibet? When it comes to the treatment of political prisoners, the People's Republic has a nightmarish record.

Daja Mizu Meston, described by all who know him as gentle, soft-spoken and scholarly, was arrested in Tibet Aug. 15 after interviewing locals about a World Bank development project in Northern China near the Tibetan border. The project is controversial because it would further Beijing's policy of resettling Chinese farmers in Tibet to dilute that nation's ethnic composition and possibly its culture.

While in custody, Meston suffered broken vertebrae and other internal injuries. His jailers claim the Newton man jumped out a third-story window to escape.

The State Department, which sent a consular official to the hospital to interview Meston, has rubber-stamped that story. "The reports of his medical condition we have received from our official in Xining are consistent with reports from the Chinese and Mr. Meston that he jumped out a window while attempting to escape," said spokesman Michelle King.

The Chinese account, combined with all that is known about this former Buddhist monk who grew up in Nepal, defies all logic.

Gabriel Lafitte, an Australian scholar who was arrested with Meston but immediately separated from him, spoke of marathon interrogations, sleep deprivation and other torture that might have driven Meston to leap from the window.

The communists are notorious for their gestapo-like treatment of those they view as enemies of that state. For the U.S. government to blandly endorse their account of how Meston was injured will only encourage Beijing to continue to

illegally detain him. This State Department will never learn that looking the other way at human rights violations only invites more of them. Now one of our own citizens is paying the price for that policy.