



## **Chinese release Newton scholar for treatment**

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A badly injured pro-Tibetan activist from Newton was released by the Chinese government yesterday, 11 days after police detained him near the site of a controversial World Bank resettlement project in China.

Daja Meston, 29, flew to Hong Kong to receive medical treatment for injuries he received when he fell from a third-floor window while trying to escape, U.S. Embassy officials said.

Before releasing him, Chinese officials required Meston to admit wrongdoing, apologize and promise not to return to China for at least five years, a U.S. State Department official said.

Meston admitted being in a restricted area, although U.S. officials have said Chinese authorities had indicated they would allow foreign visitors to that area.

"We are extremely pleased Mr. Meston was released and that he is now able to get the advanced medical care that he needs," said a State Department official, who requested anonymity. "His situation remains serious but stable."

Meston was taken from an intensive care unit at a hospital in Xining, capital of Qinghai province, and put on a chartered plane to Hong Kong, U.S. Embassy officials said.

Officials with the embassy and AEA International, a private medical company that handled the evacuation, declined to provide details, citing privacy concerns and patient confidentiality. China's Foreign Ministry also refused to answer questions about Meston's case.

Meston, an Australian researcher and a Chinese citizen hired as their translator were detained Aug.15 in the small town of Xiangride.

They were looking into a project that would move a large number of ethnic Chinese into an ethnically Tibetan area.

China wants to use \$40 million in low-cost World Bank funding to build a dam and irrigate fields for 57,800 poor farmers who would be moved from eroded and overpopulated mountains in eastern Qinghai.

Meston suffered serious spinal injuries, broken bones and other internal injuries when he fell from a third-floor window of a hotel in Xining where he was being held. China's Foreign Ministry said Meston was trying to escape.

His Australian colleague, Gabriel Lafitte, said police interrogated him repeatedly, depriving him of sleep at times to extract a confession. He was released last weekend. Chinese authorities also have not said whether Tsering Dorje, the Tibetan teacher detained with the researchers, will face punishment.

Professor Gordon Fellman, who taught Meston at Brandeis University, said he is sure Meston admitted wrongdoing simply to avoid being detained any longer.

"He didn't do anything wrong by his lights, or anyone else's lights," Fellman said. "I feel thrilled that he is released from the detention he was under, that he will get the proper care and will back in the United States soon."

He said Meston will require further medical treatment. "But he should make a full or very good recovery," he said.