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Subject: China to send envoy to Syria, urges reforms (Reuters)

BEIJING, Oct 25 (Reuters) - China on Tuesday pressed Syria to heed the "reasonable" demands of its people and live up to promises of reform, ahead of a visit to Damascus by Beijing's special envoy to the Middle East.

China has played a low-key role in the turmoil that has swept the Middle East and North Africa, but it has also moved swiftly to normalise ties with governments which have been overthrown by popular revolts, such as in Libya.

"We hope that all sides in Syria can put the interests of the country and people first, discard violence, avoid bloodshed and clashes, and resolve differences via dialogue in a peaceful way," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu.

"We believe that Syria's government should proactively fulfill its promises of reform, and answer the people's reasonable demands," she told a regular news briefing.

Chinese envoy Wu Sike would visit Syria, along with Egypt, from Oct. 26-30, Jiang added, without providing details.

China, along with Russia, recently resisted a Western push for a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning the Syrian government's crackdown on pro-reform protests that began over half a year ago.

The United States said on Monday it had pulled its ambassador out of Syria because of threats to his safety, prompting Syria to follow suit in a deterioration of ties already battered over President Bashar al-Assad's crackdown against protesters.

The United States has called for Assad to step down and, along with European allies, has intensified sanctions on Syria, including against its small but significant oil sector, a central source of foreign currency for the government.

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