

# Syria Praised for Admitting Monitors

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Russia has praised Syria's decision to let in Arab monitors, saying this could help stabilize the violence-stricken country, after Damascus made clear it agreed to the deal on the advice of its big power ally.

✘ "We believe that the document signed in Cairo gives an opportunity to ... provide safety for the Syrian people and stabilize the situation," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by Interfax.

✘ Syria agreed on Monday to let Arab League observers into the country to monitor implementation of a deal it agreed last month to pull troops from protest-hit towns, free political prisoners and start talking to dissidents. ✘ Damascus signed the deal on the counseling of Moscow, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said.

✘ An armed insurgency has emerged in the last two months in Syria, alongside a peaceful protest movement that began in March inspired by uprisings across the Arab world.

✘ President Bashar Assad's forces, including a pro-Assad militia, have reportedly suffered scores of casualties in the last few weeks, especially in the northwestern province of Idlib near

Turkey and in the central region of Homs.

✘Russia has had strong ties with Damascus since the Soviet era. Syria has been a major client for Russian arms sales and hosts a Russian naval maintenance installation on its Mediterranean coast, a rare outpost abroad for Moscow's military.

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