

# Blame game flares after Annan resigns

Russia urges replacement as Iran blames West for peace plan failure

AFP, Aleppo

World powers traded blame on Friday after Kofi Annan quit as international peace envoy to Syria, complaining that his initiative to end the bloodshed there never received the support it deserved.

The former UN secretary general hit out at "continuous finger-pointing and name-calling" at the UN Security Council, which he said had prevented coordinated action to stop the violence.

"I did not receive all the support that the cause deserved," Annan told a hastily arranged news conference in Geneva.

But Annan predicted that President Bashar al-Assad would go "sooner or later," and did not rule out his successor having more luck or success, despite his warning there was "no Plan B."

Writing in the Financial Times, Annan called on Moscow and Washington to shoulder responsibility for saving Syria from cata-

strophic civil war.

"Syria can still be saved from the worst calamity. But this requires courage and leadership, most of all from the permanent members of the Security Council, including from Presidents (Vladimir) Putin and (Barack) Obama," he wrote.

Annan's resignation sparked a new round of recriminations among the council's five permanent members, with the United States blaming Russia and China for vetoing three separate UN resolutions on the conflict.

"Annan's resignation highlights the failure at the United Nations Security Council of Russia and China to support meaningful resolutions against Assad that would have held Assad accountable," said White House spokesman Jay Carney.

Germany also said Annan's decision was partly due to Chinese and Russian opposition to sanc-



An alleged explosion in the al-Safsafa district of the central Syrian city of Homs yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

But Russia's envoy to the world body, Vitaly Churkin, insisted Moscow had supported Annan "very strongly," and Putin called his resignation a "great shame."

"Kofi Annan is a man of great merit, a brilliant diplomat and a very honest person, so it is a great shame," Putin was quoted as saying in London.

Russia yesterday called for

replacement of Kofi Annan.

"A worthy candidate to succeed Kofi Annan should be urgently found," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

"In the developing situation, keeping a UN presence in the country acquires special significance," it said.

China said it wanted the United Nations to play an important role in trying to stop the conflict, which activists say has cost the lives of more than 20,000 people since it erupted in March 2011.

Iran yesterday blamed the West, especially the United States, for the failure of the Syria peace plan worked out by Kofi Annan.

"The West and some regional countries did not want Annan to succeed," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said, quoted by the official IRNA news agency.

"Every time Mr Annan sought to resolve the Syrian crisis, the West created obstacles," he said.

## Annan struggles to escape the curse of history

REUTERS, Geneva

A visibly shaken Kofi Annan admitted defeat in his attempts to bring peace to Syria on Thursday, but - perhaps keen to protect his legacy from the taint of another genocide - laid the blame for the failure on the big powers that claim to back him.

Syria was the best chance for Annan, 74, to put to rest the failures of diplomacy in Rwanda, Bosnia, Darfur, Somalia and Iraq, which are likely to drown out the plaudits for his softly spoken mediation and efforts to eradicate poverty and AIDS that won him the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

His voice cracking with emotion as he announced his resignation as peace envoy for Syria, the former UN secretary-general threw the blame back at the UN Security Council, whose veto-wielding members are the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain.

"You have to understand, as an Envoy, I can't want peace more than the protagonists, more than the Security Council or the international community, for that matter," he said.

Annan took the job in February, seeing it as "a sacred duty" to try to resolve the crisis. But he has said he was aware that he may have been brought in too late, or too early.

His peace efforts effectively fell apart after an April 12 ceasefire failed to hold, but UN Security Council members continued to proclaim that the peace plan he formulated was the only way forward, making him increasingly look like a figleaf for inaction.

Annan was brought up in an ethnically divided culture in his native Ghana, but one where dialogue was prized and outright conflict rare. It was a time of optimism and confidence as Ghana headed for independence from Britain.

"He's driven by the idea of 'don't think no', always looking for the best outcome," Fred Eckhard, Annan's spokesman during his time as secretary-general, told Reuters in June.

His reputation as a mediator was burnished by his success in halting a spiralling conflict in Kenya in 2007, when two rival claims to the presidency sparked ethnic massacres in which more than 1,200 died.

But earlier in his career, Annan's record was less successful. He was head of UN peacekeeping in 1994, when he acknowledges he should have done more to help prevent the slaughter of 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

When his career ended in 2006, he listed his main achievements as establishing the concept of a responsibility to protect civilians when their rulers will not or cannot.

But his tenure was littered with diplomatic disasters. His worst moments, Annan said, included not being able to stop the bloodshed in Sudan's Darfur, the oil-for-food debacle and the Iraq war, after which he lost his voice for months.

Then came the most painful event - the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003, that killed 22 people after Annan had decided, at the urging of the United States, to send senior UN staff back to Iraq.

Annan was also at the helm at the time of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia, where insufficient UN peacekeeping forces again failed to stop the killing, and during a fiasco in Somalia that preceded Rwanda.

# Sudans must strike 'compromise' deal

Hillary urges the battling neighbours in Juba

AFP, Juba

The two Sudans must strike an urgent compromise deal to end bitter disputes and resume oil production, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday, warning the newly separated nations they "remain inextricably linked."

Sudan and South Sudan "will need to compromise to close the remaining gaps between them," Clinton said, after meeting South Sudan's President Salva Kiir.

"It is urgent that both sides, North and South, follow through and reach timely agreements on all outstanding issues, including oil revenue sharing, security, citizenship and border demarcation," she added.

Hillary, the most senior US official to visit since South Sudan's independence last year, highlighted Washington's concern over the

bitter dispute between Juba and Khartoum.

South Sudan's government has yet to agree on a raft of issues with Sudan, left unresolved after they split in July 2011, including border demarcation and contested areas in oil-rich regions.

Long running African Union-led talks in the Ethiopian capital have so far failed to produce a deal, with Khartoum rejecting Juba's offers, and demanding that border security must be ensured before any economic accord.

The UN Security Council gave the two countries, which earlier this year came close to a return to all-out war, until August 2 to reach a deal or face sanctions. That deadline elapsed Thursday.

At independence, the land-locked South took with it two thirds of the region's oil, but the pipelines and processing facilities remained in the North.

# Flood-hit N Korea seeks food aid

BBC ONLINE

The United Nations yesterday said North Korea has requested immediate food aid after devastating floods last month.

UN officials in Pyongyang said the need for aid was urgent after visiting flood-hit parts of the country to assess damage. North Korea state media said that at least 119 people died and tens of thousands were left homeless.

Damage to infrastructure and farmland has affected the country's already dire food shortage problem.

Residents in the most badly affected areas are in urgent need of food supplies, as well as clean water, as wells have been contaminated by sewage during the floods.

A UN spokesman in New York confirmed that the North Korean government has asked the UN to release emergency supplies such as food and fuel.

Kim Kwang-dok, vice-chairman of the Anju City People's Committee, told the Associated Press news agency that the flooding was the worst in the city's history.

North Korea relies on food aid because it cannot grow enough food to feed its people. Famine in the mid-1990s is believed to have killed hundreds of thousands of people.

A UN report released last month estimated that two-thirds of North Korea's 24m population suffer from a chronic shortage of food.

# Iran agrees to nuke talks in August: EU

AFP, Brussels

Iran's main nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili agreed in phone talks on Thursday to speak again with world powers before the month is out on Tehran's contested programme, the EU's top diplomat said.

"I proposed, and Dr Jalili agreed, that we talk again after further reflection at the end of the month," Catherine Ashton said in a statement after discussing "how to move the talks with Iran on the nuclear issue forward."

She did not say if these next talks would be face-to-face or more phone contact, but underlined: "I impressed the need for Iran now to address the issues we have raised in order to build confidence."

# 'Israel losing int'l support'

GUARDIAN ONLINE

The British ambassador to Israel has said international support for the Jewish state among those in the political mainstream is eroding, driven by settlement expansion in the West Bank and continued restrictions on Gaza.

There is "growing concern" in the UK over lack of progress towards peace with the Palestinians, and Israel was now being seen as Goliath against the Palestinians as David, said Matthew Gould, in reference to the biblical story.

In an unusually forthright interview for Israel's Channel 10 news, Gould said he detected a shift among the middle ground of British members of parliament towards a more critical view of Israel.

"Israelis might wake up in 10 years' time and find out that the level of understanding in the international community has suddenly changed, and that patience for continuing the status quo has reduced," he said.

"Support for Israel is starting to erode and that's not about these people on the fringe who are shouting loudly and calling for boycotts and all the rest of it. The interesting category are those members of parliament in the middle, and in that group I see a shift."

The shift was a result of Israeli government policies, Gould said.

"The centre ground, the majority, the British public may not be expert but they are not stupid and they see a stream of announcements about new building in settlements, they read stories about what's going on in the West Bank, they read about restrictions in Gaza. The substance of what's going wrong is really what's driving this," Gould said.



PHOTO: AFP

Anti-nuclear protesters shout slogans and hold placards as they stage a demonstration outside Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's official residence and parliament in Tokyo yesterday.

# Iraq violence kills 47 in three days

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq attacks mainly targeting security force personnel killed at least 47 people in the last three days, officials said, after government figures showed July was the bloodiest month in almost two years.

A number of attacks on security forces and their facilities, including a prison, a military site and checkpoints attributed the death toll.

A bombing and a shooting killed four soldiers and four police yesterday, security and medical officials said a day after 33 people were killed in attacks mainly targeting the security forces.

At least nine people were killed and at least 32 wounded in a car bombing in the Husseiniyah area of north Baghdad, medical officials said.

In the northern oil city of Kirkuk, militants attacked the home of a Turkmen family, cutting the throats of a father, mother and two daughters, an AFP correspondent reported.

Gunmen killed seven soldiers and wounded 11 others in three separate attacks south of the city, according to security and medical officials and Shalal Abed Ahmed, mayor of Tuz Khurmatu, where one of the attacks took place.

Violence also killed many in other parts of the country. At least 325 people were killed in July, the highest monthly death toll since August 2010, a report said on Thursday.

# US holds 'productive' talks with Pak spymaster

AFP, Washington

The US and Pakistani intelligence chiefs held "productive" talks Thursday on ways to work together to fight extremists, a US official said, in a new sign of easing tensions between the countries.

Lieutenant General Zaheer ul-Islam, the new head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, is paying the first visit to Washington in a year by the leader of Pakistan's powerful spy body.

Islam met Thursday with Central Intelligence Agency director David Petraeus and held "substantive, professional and productive" talks, a senior US official said on condition of anonymity.

"The talks provided an opportunity to discuss a number of proposals for how we can enhance our joint efforts against terrorism," the official said.



whose relationship with US spies has swung from friendly to hostile in recent years.

The remarks echo those of the US commander in Afghanistan, General John Allen, who on a visit to Pakistan on Thursday praised "significant progress" in improving cooperation between the two countries.

Pakistani intelligence and the military were humiliated in May last year when US forces secretly penetrated the country and killed the world's most wanted man Osama bin Laden, who was living in the army town of Abbottabad.

# Top Maoist arrested in West Bengal

PTI, Jhargram

Top Maoist leader Ranjan Munda, who carried out subversive activities in West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa, and another squad leader were arrested by the joint forces from West Midnapore district yesterday, police said.

Munda was surrounded by the joint forces in a forested area at Chunghati, around 8 km from the Odisha border, at 2:30 pm, they said.

Munda, a squad leader of Nayagram-Gopiballavpur, and Jayanta, squad leader of Jhargram, did not offer resistance when they were arrested, they said, adding some other Maoists who were present fled.

An AK-47 rifle, an INSAS rifle, a pistol and 150 cartridges were seized from them.

## NEWS IN brief

### O'Neill re-elected PNG PM

AFP, Port Moresby

Peter O'Neill was re-elected yesterday the next leader of Papua New Guinea, ending a turbulent period in the nation's politics which at one point saw it with two rival prime ministers.

O'Neill won the vote on the floor of parliament 94 to 12 after elections handed him the overwhelming support of the Pacific island nation's lawmakers, his spokesman Daniel Korimbao told AFP from the capital Port Moresby.

An AFP photographer confirmed that O'Neill was sworn in by Governor-General Michael Ogio later yesterday.

O'Neill's People's National Congress (PNC) won more seats than any other party in the polls which began on June 23 and he was able to swell support by

### Ex-president of Mongolia jailed

AFP, Ulan Bator

A court in Mongolia has jailed former president Nambur Enkhbayar for four years after finding him guilty of corruption charges that he has called politically motivated.

Enkhbayar, 54, served as prime minister and then president for almost a decade until losing office in 2009. He was arrested in April in a dawn raid broadcast live on national television.

On Thursday, a Mongolian court found him guilty of misappropriating gifts intended for a monastery, along with other corruption charges, in a hearing broadcast to the nation.

The court originally sentenced him to seven years, but reduced it by three years, citing an amnesty law.

Enkhbayar, who was barred from running in Mongolia's June parliamentary elections, called the charges "groundless". His lawyer said they would

### World's oldest hippo dies at 62

AFP, Chicago

Donna, believed to be the world's oldest hippo, has died at the age of 62 after living more than two decades beyond the massive mammal's usual life expectancy, zoo officials said.

Donna had lived most of her life in the small town of Evansville, Indiana at the Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden.

Donna was born at what is now the Memphis Zoo in 1951 and arrived at Mesker Park on August 7, 1956.

Hippos typically live no more than 40 years in the