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## Kofi Annan Quits as Syria Peace Envoy

By John Glaser

August 2, 2012

Kofi Annan is stepping down as UN-Arab League envoy for the Syria conflict at the end of the month, United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon [said in a statement](#), as talks began to find a successor.

“Kofi Annan deserves our profound admiration for the selfless way in which he has put his formidable skills and prestige to this most difficult and potentially thankless of assignments,” Ban said.

But Annan was not so genial. He blamed “finger pointing and name calling” at the UN Security Council for his decision to quit.

Annan’s plan was viable in and of itself, but it became unworkable because both sides in the Syria conflict were backed by foreign powers, which meant neither side felt they needed to compromise.

[Foreign meddling](#) on behalf of all sides has been instrumental in [prolonging the conflict by emboldening both sides](#) and making a political settlement more remote. While Russia and Iran continue to support the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the US and its allies in Europe and the Persian Gulf states [continue to aid and weaponize the Syrian rebels](#).

Annan had said as much last month, explaining that while Russia had received a lot of criticism for continuing to back the violent President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, “very few things are said about other countries that send arms and money and weigh on the situation on the ground.”

“Syria indeed has become an arena for outside meddling, but the meddling has been far more effective at sustaining the fighting than ending it,” says a [report](#) from the International Crisis Group. “Because the mission’s success was predicated on finding middle ground when most parties yearned for a knockout punch, few truly wished it well, even as no one wanted to be caught burying it.”

UN rights chief Navi Pillay last week [condemned](#) the continued flow of weapons from foreign powers to both sides in the Syrian conflict. “The ongoing provision of arms to the Syrian government and to its opponents feeds additional violence,” she said in the text of remarks made to the Security Council. “Any further militarization of the conflict must be avoided at all costs.”

The support has continued even though outside powers are well aware that both sides in the conflict have committed serious atrocities and human rights abuses and despite the fact that experts have repeatedly said such policies are worsening the conflict.

[James Dobbins](#), director of the [RAND](#) International Security and Defense Policy Center and a former US assistant secretary of state [told NPR recently](#), “the external environment in which sides are providing arms to both of the contending parties—all of that suggests that the situation’s going to continue to deteriorate.”