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Annan to Help in Kenya, Group Says

By [JEFFREY GETTLEMAN](#)

NAIROBI, [Kenya](#) — With no sign of a breakthrough in the Kenyan political crisis, it appears that a high-profile mediator may be flying in to help: [Kofi Annan](#).

The [African Union](#) announced on Thursday that Mr. Annan, the former secretary general of the [United Nations](#), was taking over the role played by President John Kufuor of Ghana, who is also the chairman of the African Union.

Mr. Kufuor spent the past two days in Kenya trying to broker a truce between the government and opposition leaders to end the crisis here, which erupted after flawed elections last month and left hundreds dead from violence. Mr. Kufuor failed to get the two sides even to meet, but he insisted that all was not lost.

“Both sides agreed there should be an end to the violence, and they also agreed there should be dialogue,” he said.

Mr. Annan will lead a panel of African dignitaries who are coming to try to bring the two sides together, Mr. Kufuor said.

There was no immediate comment from Mr. Annan about the new role, but [Ban Ki-moon](#), his successor at the United Nations, views the choice as a “positive development” and called Mr. Annan on Thursday morning to express his “strong support,” Mr. Ban’s spokeswoman said.

Many diplomats here are pessimistic that a solution will be found anytime soon because neither [Mwai Kibaki](#), Kenya’s president, nor [Raila Odinga](#), the top opposition leader, is budging. Both claim to have won the presidential election on Dec. 27.

Western observers have said that there was widespread evidence that the president's party interfered with the vote tallying process and rigged the results to stay in power.

Mr. Kibaki has moved ahead with unilaterally naming cabinet members, which opposition leaders called a "slap in the face" and which American officials called disappointing.

On Thursday, opposition leaders said Mr. Kibaki refused to sign an agreement that had been approved by the [World Bank](#) that recommended a transitional government and an investigation into the election results. World Bank officials in Kenya did not return phone calls. Alfred Mutua, a Kenyan government spokesman, said that the document had been prepared by World Bank officials and that the president rejected it because it was "meant to favor certain groups."

Both the government and opposition leaders, who have blamed each other for the surprise burst of bloodletting in such a stable country as Kenya, are now blaming each other for the lack of progress in negotiations.

"The government had offered dialogue, which was to be facilitated by President John Kufuor, but Orange Democratic Movement leaders have not been responsive," a government statement said, referring to Mr. Odinga's political movement.

Salim Lone, an Odinga spokesman, said: "The government was obviously never serious about negotiations. To tell you the truth, we're getting discouraged."

Kennedy Abwao contributed reporting.