

## **The Philadelphia Inquirer**

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### **Editorial: The U.N. tries again**

When Ban Ki-moon succeeded Kofi Annan this year as U.N. secretary general, the South Korean diplomat vowed to make a priority of ending the genocide in Sudan's Darfur region.

He's working on fulfilling that pledge. Ban's trip to Sudan last week helped set the time and place for the next peace talks between the Khartoum government and rebels - Oct. 27 in Libya.

If only ending a genocide were as easy as scheduling a meeting. The situation in Darfur has gotten more complicated while staying just as dangerous for civilians.

The two main rebel factions have splintered into numerous groups that are now fighting each other.

Violence by rebels and the government has forced international aid groups to withdraw their workers from hot spots. One million people in need of aid are believed to be in areas relief groups cannot reach.

Apparently, using his forces and allied militia to kill 200,000 Darfur residents and displace 2.5 million isn't enough for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. His government stands accused of resettling Arabs in villages that black Africans fled. That could complete the ethnic cleansing that has been going on since 2003.

Bashir has agreed to an expanded peacekeeping force that supplements the African Union contingent with U.N. troops. But assembling that peacekeeping operation is moving much too slowly.

Ban deserves praise for focusing minds and attention on Darfur. But his approach is risky.

Bashir seems to be responding to Ban's overtures. But Bashir and his ruling National Congress Party have repeatedly broken promises. And Ban must not let his cultivation of Bashir minimize the Sudanese government's role as the state sponsor of genocide.

The rebels have committed hideous crimes, but international law and common decency call upon nations to protect their citizens - not target a group to be raped, murdered and displaced.

Ban, an experienced negotiator, must recognize the complexities of his task, including helping rebels to unify. He must continue to pressure Bashir to end attacks and cooperate in reaching a long-term political settlement. A cease-fire is needed immediately.

But Ban's cannot be a solo effort on behalf of the world community.

The secretary general's aggressive diplomacy is no fig leaf for the earlier failure of the United Nations - especially the Security Council - to intervene.

Security Council members could help Ban by agreeing upon a single negotiating track, rather than allowing Darfur combatants to pursue myriad paths. They could draw up sanctions against Khartoum to encourage the government's participation.

They must stop wasting time and find the resources to send U.N. peacekeepers to Darfur with a mandate to disarm gunmen and protect civilians.