

# **Annan's Exit 'Opens Gates' for Intervention - Russian Ministry**

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MOSCOW: The resignation of UN and Arab League envoy to Syria Kofi Annan "opens the gates" for backers of a military intervention into the Arab state to force out the ruling authorities, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said on Friday.

Annan, who assumed his post in February and authored a six-point peace plan aimed at ending the Syrian conflict, announced on Thursday that he would quit by the end of the month citing the deadlock at the UN Security Council over ways to resolve the current political crisis in the country.

"Annan's decision against extending his mandate as the UN envoy to Syria raises loads of questions regarding the future of this country. He is an honest international mediator but someone wants to push him out of the game to open the gates for forceful actions. This is obvious," Gatilov wrote in his Twitter account.

Since March 2011, the Syrian conflict has claimed 14,000-20,000 lives, according to estimates by various Syrian opposition groups. The West is pushing for President Bashar al-Assad's ouster, while Russia and China are trying to prevent outside interference in Syria saying the Assad regime and the opposition are both to blame for the bloodshed.

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