

Kenya president seeks to move past violence: Calls postelection crisis the "country's little mistake"

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Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki, speaking at a national prayer breakfast, urged his fellow citizens to move on and rebuild their nation, while describing Kenya's destructive postelection crisis as the "country's little mistake" that God wanted repaired.

"We must not give up. We must move forward. We shall succeed," Kibaki said at a May 31 prayer breakfast attended by politicians, religious leaders and others. "Since we believe, let us all forgive each other."

A political crisis in Kenya erupted after the December 27 national elections in which the incumbent Kibaki was declared winner of the presidential contest, which opposition leader Raila Odinga said was rigged.

About 1,500 people are believed to have been killed in the unrest that followed the elections, and at least another 300,000 were driven from their homes. In April, following talks brokered by former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, a coalition government was set up with Kibaki remaining as president and Odinga installed as prime minister.

"The world should know we want to succeed. What happened was because of our little mistake," said Kibaki. "God wants us to repair Kenya, and I have no doubt we shall succeed."

Kenya began holding national prayer breakfasts six years ago in order to unite the country in offering repentance for mistakes and asking forgiveness.

The chief speaker at this year's gathering, Walter Fauntroy, a pastor and former U.S. congressperson, stressed the example of nonviolence exemplified by people such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., and he reminded them of King's words: "We must

learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

About 40,000 people driven from their homes during the recent election-related violence are now living in camps for displaced persons. -*Ecumenical News International*