

Monday, 7 January 2013

## Abbas orders official use of State of Palestine



Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas gave orders Sunday for work to begin on new passports, ID cards, drivers' licenses and stamps reading "State of Palestine," official media said. The decree, carried by the official Wafa news agency, came in the wake of the Palestinians' successful bid late last year for non-member observer state status at the United Nations over intense Israeli and US opposition. Abbas said the changed language on official documents would help strengthen the Palestinian state "on the ground and build its institutions... and its sovereignty over the its land." Already last week, he ordered the foreign ministry and embassies around the world to begin using "State of Palestine" in official correspondence. Previously, official documents issued by Abbas's government, including passports and other identification documents, had been labeled as issued by the Palestinian Authority, which he heads. Israel has criticized the Palestinians for their successful bid for enhanced UN status, saying Palestinian statehood can only be achieved through bilateral talks with the Jewish state. The Israeli foreign ministry declined to comment on the latest Palestinian move. The Palestinians say the U.N. upgrade will strengthen their position in negotiations with Israel and is a complement to any future talks.