

# *Palestinian President Signs Onto International Criminal Court*

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Ramallah, January 1 (RHC-teleSUR), -- President Mahmoud Abbas signed on to 20 international agreements Wednesday, including the Rome Statute of the International Court (ICC).

The move comes just one day after a vote calling for a Palestinian state by 2017 failed at the UN Security Council due to the objections of Australia and the U.S.

By signing onto the ICC, Israel faces future potential lawsuits for war crimes committed against the Palestinian territories since 2002.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacted furiously to the news, declaring that Palestinians and not Israel, could risk judicial prosecution at the Hague, and threatened Palestinians with retaliatory measures.

The U.S. government also condemned Abbas' initiative, suggesting it was not helpful for the peace process. "It is an escalatory step that will not achieve any of the outcomes most Palestinians have long hoped to see for their people," said State Department spokesman Jeff Rathke. "Actions like this are not the answer."

The head of Palestinian Authority answered that this decision was the last resort for peace in the region.

On Tuesday, a resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state by late 2017 failed due to opposition from the United States and Australia. The motion, introduced by Jordan on the behalf of Palestinians fell one vote short on the nine required for approval, though it would have likely been vetoed by the United States.

In 2012, the U.N. General Assembly voted for the recognition of Palestinian statehood, making Palestinians eligible to join the ICC. This encouraged then Abbas to move forward on international forums, while several parliaments of EU countries voted resolutions urging their governments to recognize the Palestinian state.

The Israeli assault on Gaza in June that killed more than 2,100 Palestinians also put pressure on Abbas to prove his commitment to the Palestinian cause.

The ICC enables member countries to sue individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 1 July 2002, date of the signing of the Rome statute.

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