



Russian President and head of Palestinian National Authority open Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Bethlehem

[gallery]

On 26 June 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin and head of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, took part in the opening of the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Bethlehem, official site of the President reports.

Attending the ceremony were Sergei Stepashin, chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, who accompanies Russian President in his trip to the Middle East, and other members of the IOPS.

“We have gathered today in Bethlehem, the city of Jesus Christ, a place that is famous and revered throughout the world, to open the Russian Centre for Science and Culture. I see in this a deep continuity of the centuries-old spiritual traditions that have always linked Russia and the Holy Land. It is also a clear testimony to the special nature of relations between our people,” President Putin said in his address at the opening ceremony.

Vladimir Putin and Mahmoud Abbas saw the multimedia library. Its site has prepared a set of twelve rare books with pilgrims’ stories about holy sites in Palestine. One of the stories dates back to the 12th century. It was written by hegumen Daniel and is the first-ever description of the holy sites in the Russian language.

The Centre was built on the plot of land, which was given by the Palestinian authorities to the IOPS four years ago. Sergei Stepashin laid the foundation stone in June 2011.

The Centre began its work on June 1, 2012. It contains a cinema hall for 350 people, the multimedia library, a studio for dances and ballet, a shop, and class rooms to accommodate students who will learn languages, Russian including.