



The Medical School for International Health

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For interviews and photos contact:

Mark A. Thomas

(212) 305-9587

mt2432@columbia.edu

Student Pushing for Support for Darfur Refugees

MSIH Student organizes meeting with U.S. Senator, rallies support for refugees

April 2, 2008 — (New York, NY) —

While conflict in Darfur-Sudan continues, political leaders and organizations are not alone in calling an end to the humanitarian crisis — one medical student has made a personal push to make a difference. Shaanan Meyerstein is a 2nd year medical student at the Medical School for International Health (MSIH), a collaborative effort between Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Columbia University Medical Center. Shaanan has spent time increasing awareness of the conflict, working directly with medical refugees from Sudan, and now lobbying supporters and political leaders to take action.

Shaanan served as the volunteer coordinator for MSIH students, facilitating volunteerism in the Bedouin community, provide health care support to undocumented foreign workers, and visitation of patients within Israeli hospitals. He developed a stronger passion for one particular patient-group — the Darfur refugees. Nearly 700 Sudanese refugees were granted legal status by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, including Adam Mohammad, who is undergoing medical treatment for Leukemia. Shaanan and fellow classmate Nathaniel DeFelice have rallied support to help with Adam's medical expenses, while he received care at Soroka University Medical Center, the teaching-hospital for the MSIH.

The collaborative school offers a M.D. degree to students interested in careers in global health and provides innovative learning tools such as modules, medical training in developing countries, and access to experts working in the emerging field of global health. Like many MSIH students — who come from countries and nationalities across the globe — Shaanan has been a student-organizer since studying religion and pre-

—more—



The Medical School for International Health

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center

medicine at Columbia University in New York. While at Columbia, Shaanan interned with Save A Child's Heart International in Tanzania and participated in a medical mission to Vietnam with classmate Ariel Daube. In 2003, he arranged a volunteer trip of 40 students to Argentina and Uruguay to assist poverty stricken communities. As organizations elevated the push for action in Sudan, Shaanan reached out to the MSIH's other accepted students to encourage them to march at the National Mall and support more aid for Darfur. More than 160 humanitarian and religious groups organized a rally of more than 10,000 people.

In 2007, Shaanan started his work with the Darfur survivors. “Adam has repeatedly said to me that there's a divine reason for him to have been brought to Israel,” he said. “He would have died in Sudan without this top level Israeli medical care.”

In February 2008, Shaanan organized a meeting between MSIH students and three-time U.S. Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kansas) during the his recent visit to the Middle East. Brownback discussed with students their involvement with issues related to Africa, healthcare, and the role of the U.S. in providing aid to the developing world. Brownback has been instrumental in organizing a state divestment campaign for the U.S. to divest pension funds from companies who conduct business with the Sudanese government. He also co-sponsored the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which formally classified the Darfur conflict as genocide. The act also advocated sending NATO troops to support of the African Union forces and enforce a no-fly zone in Darfur.

“Senator Brownback spent more than an hour with us, in the same afternoon he met with the King of Jordan, the Palestinian Prime Minister, and former Israeli prime ministers — it was encouraging to see a prominent U.S. lawmaker care so much,” Shaanan said. “Despite the Senator's conservative politics on other issues, we were all united together by a common interest and value of helping the under-served wherever they might be in the world.”

—more—



The Medical School for International Health

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center

The Medical School for International Health is a collaborative initiative between Ben-Gurion University and Columbia University Medical Center to advance global health medical education. It is the only four-year American style medical school in the world that incorporates international health in all four years of medical study and culminates with a required international health clerkship. The MSIH integrates international health training through a year long course for first-year students, modulus on topics such as *Nutrition in the Developing World*, *Infectious and Tropical Diseases*, and *Global Health and Environment*, and a required clerkship in an international clinical setting.

###

To download this release: http://www.msihmd.org/msih/pressreleases/PressRelease_ShanaanMeyerstein.pdf