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FIRST PROGRAM TO TRAIN JORDANIAN PARAMEDICS IN ISRAEL LAUNCHED AT BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

**-- Collaboration is Part of Long Term Plan for Coordinated Responses to
Catastrophic Emergencies in the Middle East --**

BEER-SHEVA, May, 25, 2010 – An unprecedented collaborative program is underway at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) to train Jordanian and Israeli paramedics side by side in emergency medicine.

The Israeli-Jordanian Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration, taught in Arabic and English, enables approximately 15 Jordanian students to obtain the same emergency medicine training as Israeli students. The Collaboration is sanctioned by the Jordanian government whose goal it is to strengthen paramedic personnel in a cooperative program involving the Jordan Red Crescent, Israel's Magen David Adom (national emergency medical services) and both governments.

BGU provides the only university-based academic degree for paramedics in the Middle East. The curriculum offers an opportunity for Jordanians to obtain both in-depth academic knowledge and hands-on experience, leading to a B.S. in Emergency Medicine. In the first and second years, studies take place at BGU's Department of Emergency Medicine. In the clinical third year, students will rotate between Israeli and Jordanian institutions. Jordanian paramedics will use their skills to respond to everyday medical emergencies and disasters while planning new projects for future generations.

Israel is known for its highly trained emergency medical teams who are often sent to nations around the world to assist in managing natural disasters, most recently in Haiti, and devastating terrorist attacks. The goal is that this program will encourage Middle East countries and Israel to work together in the event of a significant emergency or natural disaster, such as an earthquake.

"As partners in this highly important regional humanitarian effort, both Jordanian students and their Israeli colleagues will benefit from this innovative training program, learning together, developing mutual respect and strengthening cross-cultural understanding," explains Doron Krakow, executive vice president of American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Since 1995, the Department of Emergency Medicine at BGU has trained paramedics in a bachelor's degree program in Emergency Medicine. This year a master's degree program was inaugurated. Many graduates of this program have assumed prominent roles in Israel's national emergency medical services and other medical organizations.

The idea for the collaboration took shape years ago through a program called Partnerships in Peace based at McGill University in Montreal. Three participants got to know each other --Dr. Mohammed al-Hadid of Jordan, Prof. James Torczyner, director of the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building and Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt, rector at BGU.

A key proponent of this program is H.E. Dr. Mohammed Al-Hadid, who is president of the Jordan Red Crescent (JRC), and has been chairman of the Standing Commission – the highest body in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. He was head of the International Red Cross and chaired the Conference that finally allowed Israel international recognition and membership, which he advocated to leverage the Jordanian neighbor's world-class medical expertise and training.

“There are only three places that provide emergency medical response qualifications at the bachelor's degree level,” explains Al-Hadid. “Either we go to the United States or we go to Australia, or we choose to go next door to our neighbors. We were very impressed with the level of expertise demonstrated in Israel -- and when you see something that is working for others, you want to have the best for your own people.”

The Israel-Jordan Academic Emergency Medicine Collaboration is one of many BGU projects that reach out to the region's nations. Other partnerships include a joint program with a Jordanian university to restore the Red Sea's coral reef; treaties for water conservation and use being proposed to the governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority; enrollment of students from Arab countries in the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies; and outreach to Bedouins through a range of business, educational and agricultural activities.

About American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (AABGU) plays a vital role in sustaining David Ben-Gurion's vision, creating a world-class institution of education and research in the Israeli desert, nurturing the Negev community and sharing the University's expertise locally and around the globe. With more than 19,000 students on campuses in Beer-Sheva, Sede Boqer and Eilat in Israel's southern desert, BGU is a university with a conscience, where the highest academic standards are integrated with community involvement, committed to sustainable development of the Negev.

For more information, please visit www.aabgu.org.

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