

## Over 950 Refugees Treated at Clinic Established by the IMA and Ministry of Health

**F**or the past few years penniless refugees from African states such as Nigeria, Somalia and the Ivory Coast, have been entering Israel via the Egyptian border. Two thirds of these refugees live in squalor in Tel Aviv and are not eligible to receive health services, as they are not citizens or residents of Israel.

The IMA has taken steps to enable the refugees to receive adequate medical treatment. Besides the organization's initiative in the Knesset to amend the National Health Insurance Law to include refugees and asylum seekers, the IMA has established, together with the Ministry of Health, a clinic that provides primary health care to these refugees. In addition, the IMA has initiated a major drive to secure medication free of charge and has, in fact, received donations from major pharmaceutical companies.

Since the opening of the clinic, located in the Tel Aviv central bus station, in September 2008, over 950 refugees have been treated. The clinic currently has about 130 doctors volunteering there.

Dr. Blachar, President of the IMA, said that though the clinic currently only provides primary health care, it is possible that in the future its activities will be expanded to provide a solution for more complicated health problems as well. He



■ Refugees at the IMA clinic

stated that pharmaceutical companies offer the refugees free medicines that they may collect, with a prescription, from any Super Pharm branch. Dr. Blachar emphasized that the IMA and the Ministry of Health established the clinic as a temporary measure until there is proper legislation regarding the refugees. It is the state's responsibility to take upon itself treatment of refugees and include them in the National Health Insurance Law.

Dr. Michael Dor, the director of the branch of general medicine at the Ministry of Health, called upon additional doctors and nurses to join the clinic by donating one day a month.

Dr. Shai Pintov, a specialist in pediatrics and a volunteering family doctor at the clinic, said that it is incredible to see the level of need that exists in the people reaching the clinic. He gave the example of a man, jailed for four months, and a fugitive of the immigration authorities for two months, who went without medical treatment despite suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure.

Dr. Boaz Lev, Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Health, clarified that the clinic maintains its ethical responsibility and medical confidentiality and that no medical information will be leaked to external sources.