

Fatherhood is as Important as Motherhood



Egypt is involved in a dialogue on the concepts of childhood and motherhood while fatherhood remains neglected. The dialogue proposes that a working mother should be given a maternity leave with full salary for one year **or** a full leave with half salary for a number of years in order to raise the family.

However, Egyptian activists feel that these are only partial solutions for they fail to include the father in the task of child-rearing. They claim that these solutions are based on the traditional relationship between the mother and her child. They feel that these solutions reinforce the common belief that the father is there as a bread earner rather than an active partner in raising the children side by side with the mother.

Keeping in mind that early years are crucial in the development of a child's personality, the absence of the father is just as problematic as the absence of the mother. Consequently, Egyptian activists feel that it is the duty of the government to encourage the father and the mother to share, jointly, the responsibilities of raising the family.

In developed countries, maternity leaves are divided between the mother and the father. This is done in order to make sure that the father gets a true feeling for his child, and to care for him/her as a total human being and not simply as an offspring. Sometimes the father chooses to spend more time with the child than the mother especially if her work is more demanding than his and if her salary is more lucrative than his.

Excerpts from an article: **On Maternity Leave And Work of Women in Egypt**. Taken from NOUN (No. 3, November, 1989), an Egyptian Quarterly by the Association of the Solidarity of Arab Women.