



The UAE's New Personal Status Law 2025: What You Need to Know

With the introduction of Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2024, reforms to the **Personal Status Law** have come into effect in **April 2025**. These changes impact key areas such as **divorce, child custody, traveling with your child, financial support** and **inheritance**.

Here's what you need to know:

1. Divorce: More Accessible and More Balanced

One of the most notable developments is the ability for residents to choose the law that will govern their marriage or divorce proceedings. **If no foreign law is selected, UAE law will apply by default.** This flexibility is particularly valuable for international couples with differing legal and cultural backgrounds.

The law also broadens the grounds for divorce, explicitly recognising issues such as substance abuse, imprisonment, abandonment, and medical incapacity. These provisions offer greater legal protection to spouses in difficult or unsafe relationships.

2. Equal Parental Custody Until Age 18

Under the new regime, **both parents retain custody of the child until the age of 18**, a major shift from the previous thresholds (11 for boys, 13 for girls). This change underlines the principle of shared parental responsibility, in line with the child's best interests.

In addition:

- Children over **15 years** old can express their preference for which parent they wish to live with.
- **Mothers no longer risk losing custody** solely for moving out of the family home, provided the child's welfare is not affected.

3. Child Travel and Documents: Equal Rights and Clear Penalties

The new law addresses one of the most common sources of parental conflict: **traveling with your children**.

- Either parent may travel with a child **for up to 60 days per year** without the other parent's consent (authorization by the court)
- **Failing to return key documents** such as passports or Emirates ID can now result in fines.
- Travelling abroad with a child **without the required consent** can lead to legal penalties.

This aims to reduce travel-related disputes and prevent international custody issues.

4. Inheritance and Wills: Clarity for Muslims and Non-Muslims Alike

For Muslim residents, inheritance remains governed by **Sharia**. The updated law introduces procedural clarity, including the appointment of a dedicated Estate Judge and clearer probate jurisdiction.

For **non-Muslims**, testamentary freedom is preserved under the **DIFC Wills Service Centre** and the **Abu Dhabi Judicial Department**. Non-Muslims can still avoid Sharia law by registering a will under the available civil frameworks, which is an important step for many expatriates.

5. Stronger Financial Protections for Women and Children

The law enhances financial safeguards for spouses and children by:

- Allowing **wives to claim backdated maintenance** going back up to 6 months.
- Prioritizing **alimony and child support** over other debts in court proceedings.
- Prohibiting the **sale or lease of jointly owned assets** without the other spouse's written consent.
- Requiring fathers to continue financially supporting **daughters until they marry or become self-sufficient**, even after divorce.

Need to Update Your Will? Considering Divorce? Concerned About Custody?

Whether you need advice on structuring your will, understanding your financial rights, or navigating complex custody arrangements, our legal team at [Meyer-Reumann & Partners](#) is here to guide you every step of the way.

Contact Info

Park Place Tower,
Office No. 503,
P.O. Box 9353,
Dubai,
United Arab Emirates

+971 4 331 7110
dubai@meyer-reumann.com

Practice Areas

- Intellectual Property
- Company Law
- Real Estate Law
- Family Law
- Egyptian Litigation
- Italian Desk
- Labour Law
- Commercial Law
- Inheritance Law
- Saudi Litigation
- German Desk
- Offshore