



Modern Love, Modern Laws: Civil Marriages and Prenuptial Agreements in the UAE

A. Introduction

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates has taken bold and progressive steps to modernise its legal framework for personal status matters – especially for non-Muslim residents. From the introduction of the Personal Status Law to the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Civil Family Court, the emirate is fast becoming a beacon for legal innovation in family law across the region.

B. Civil marriage in Abu Dhabi

In 2021, Abu Dhabi introduced a civil marriage system that allows non-UAE nationals of any religion – including Muslims – to marry under a secular legal framework. This marked a significant step forward in the region's approach to personal status matters, offering residents and tourists a court-administered, non-religious process without the need to involve embassies or religious institutions.

The system is simple, efficient, and inclusive, making it an appealing option for many expatriates living in the UAE. Civil marriage certificates issued in Abu Dhabi are also recognised internationally, provided they are properly attested, through the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant authorities. Since its launch, the Civil Family Court has processed thousands of applications, offering a modern,

streamlined alternative to traditional or religious procedures, with online applications and swift approvals reflecting a forward-thinking approach.

C. What about prenuptial agreements?

Often seen as a tool for the wealthy or the cautious, prenuptial agreements are becoming an increasingly common consideration for couples planning a civil marriage. But what exactly is a prenup?

A prenuptial agreement is a legal contract entered into before marriage that outlines how assets, debts, and financial responsibilities will be handled in the event of divorce or death. Far from being a signal of mistrust, prenups are seen today as practical and transparent tools that help couples enter marriage with clarity and confidence.

D. Recognised under Abu Dhabi law

Here's the good news: under Abu Dhabi's Civil Marriage and Divorce Law, prenuptial agreements are expressly recognised and enforceable. The legal framework encourages couples to consider financial planning as part of their marriage journey, and it provides a clear mechanism to do so.

With most legal agreements, enforceability will ultimately depend on the circumstances at the time of enforcement. As long as the agreement has been legally reviewed and aligned with the applicable laws, it should generally be upheld.

What's even better? The process of formalising a prenup is seamlessly integrated with the civil marriage process. Couples can notarise their prenuptial agreement and register their civil marriage in the same visit, making it incredibly smooth and efficient.

E. Need help drafting a prenup?

If you or someone you know is considering a civil marriage in Abu Dhabi and wants to explore a prenuptial agreement, our team at [Meyer-Reumann & Partners](#) will be pleased to help and can support you with clear, professional legal drafting tailored to your needs. Please reach out to us by emailing natacha@meyer-reumann.com.

Contact Info

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

+971 4 331 7110
+971 506449026
dubai@meyer-reumann.com

Practice Areas

- Tax Law
- Intellectual Property
- Company Law
- Real Estate Law
- Family Law
- Italian Desk
- Labour Law
- Commercial Law
- Inheritance Law
- Offshore
- German Desk