



What you need to know about writing a will in Dubai

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A new law is going to make things a whole lot easier for expats...

It's not something anyone likes to think about – especially in a city with so many happy distractions. But writing a will is one of the **most important things you can do**, both for yourself and for your family. It spells out exactly what you want to happen to your money, possessions and property after you die.

For expats in Dubai, until now, setting your affairs in order has been a rather complicated process, **mostly carried out under Sharia law**.

Assets would typically be split under the Islamic system, where **male heirs and relatives receive a larger share** – meaning widows receive less than under Western inheritance systems.

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However, this week, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, **issued a new law allowing non-Muslims to write their wills under internationally recognised common law**, or “according to their wishes”, as he put it.



By Siobhan Downes

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And while it's a document you **hopefully won't have to use for a long time**, this definitely makes things easier if you're planning on sticking around in Dubai for the long term.

Want to know more? We got legal experts [Nadim Bardawil](#) and [John Peacock](#) at BSA Ahmad Bin Hezeem & Associates LLP to break it down for us...



What was the previous situation for non-Muslims registering wills in Dubai?

Up until May 2015, there were no clear procedural guidelines for non-Muslims to register valid and enforceable wills in Dubai. In May 2015, the DIFC Wills & Probate Registry (WPR) was created, allowing non-Muslims to register wills for their assets in Dubai.

How does this new law change things?

This new law galvanises the creation of the WPR and creates a similar wills registry for non-Muslims with the Dubai Courts. While a Memorandum of Understanding had previously been signed between the Dubai Courts and the DIFC Courts regarding the recognition of wills registered in the WPR, this new legislation will entrench the acceptance of the wills previously registered through the WPR, and also wills that are registered through the Dubai Court system.

Who can register a will in Dubai?

Any non-Muslims holding assets in Dubai can now register a will, without any requirement for such individual to be a resident of Dubai or of the UAE.

Why should someone register a will in Dubai?

Registering a will through the Dubai Courts clarifies how a testator's assets will be distributed upon death. This provides assurance to both the testator and his/her family that there will be a freedom of testation and a clear acceptance of non-Muslim principles of succession and will decrease financial uncertainty for family members and dependents.

What is the process for registering a will in Dubai if you're a non-Muslim?

Currently, non-Muslims can register wills in the DIFC with the WPR. Once the Dubai Courts wills registry is up and running, non-Muslims will also be able to register wills through said Dubai Courts.

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