



Residency after divorce in the UAE: can a former spouse be required to continue visa sponsorship?

A. Introduction

Divorce has legal consequences in the UAE that extend beyond family law and into immigration status. This is particularly relevant where one spouse has been residing in the country as a dependent under the other spouse's residence visa sponsorship. A frequent question is whether the sponsoring spouse can be required to continue sponsorship after divorce, and what options are available to the dependent spouse.

B. Residence visas linked to marriage

Under UAE immigration law, family residence visas are based on a valid legal relationship between the sponsor and the dependent. Where a spouse is sponsored as a dependent, that sponsorship is legally connected to the existence of the marriage. Once the marriage is formally dissolved, the legal basis for spousal sponsorship generally ceases to exist.

The applicable framework is Federal Decree-Law No. 29 of 2021 on the Entry and Residence of Foreigners, together with Cabinet Resolution No. 65 of 2022 issuing its Executive Regulations. These provisions govern the status of residents whose visas are linked to family sponsorship.

C. Post-divorce residence option

Where a person is divorced while residing in the UAE under their spouse's sponsorship, UAE regulations allow the dependent spouse to apply for a one-year residence extension following divorce. This extension runs from the official date on which the divorce becomes final.

The purpose of this one-year period is to provide legal stability and allow time for the individual to regularise their status. During this period, the divorced spouse may, for example, transition to employment-based sponsorship, self-sponsorship (where available), investor or business-related residence, or another lawful residence category.

Once the divorce is finalised, the former sponsoring spouse should not continue to sponsor the ex-spouse's residence visa. The one-year extension is independent of the former sponsor's consent and does not create an ongoing sponsorship obligation.

D. No obligation to sponsor a former spouse

UAE law does not provide a legal basis for compelling a former spouse to continue sponsoring the other spouse's residence visa after divorce. Sponsorship is not a continuing legal duty once the marriage has ended, regardless of the length of the marriage or the duration of residence in the UAE.

Accordingly, courts do not have the authority to order an ex-spouse to maintain immigration sponsorship for a former partner. Each individual must hold a valid residence status in their own right after divorce.

E. Residence visas for children

The situation is different when it comes to children. A parent may generally continue to sponsor the residence visas of the children after divorce, provided the relevant immigration requirements are met. In certain circumstances, either parent may be eligible to act as sponsor, depending on factors such as income thresholds, custody or guardianship arrangements, and the policies of the competent immigration authority.

It is important to note that visa sponsorship for children is distinct from questions of custody, guardianship, child maintenance or parental responsibility, which are governed by personal status laws rather than immigration regulations.

F. Interaction with family law

While immigration law determines residence status, divorce also triggers broader legal issues, including spousal maintenance, child support and custody. These matters are regulated under UAE personal status legislation, primarily Federal Law No. 28 of 2005 on Personal Status and, for non-Muslims, Federal Law No. 41 of 2022 on Civil Personal Status.

Because immigration status and family law consequences often intersect, individuals going through a divorce in the UAE should seek legal advice to ensure that both residency and family law matters are addressed in a coordinated and legally secure manner.

G. Conclusion

In summary, a spouse who was sponsored as a dependent does not lose legal status immediately upon divorce, but sponsorship by the former spouse does not continue. The law provides a transitional one-year residence option, after which the individual must hold an independent basis for residence. There is no legal mechanism to compel a former spouse to continue visa sponsorship, while children's residence arrangements follow separate rules and require careful planning in light of custody and sponsorship requirements.

H. Support

If you need any support on this matter, 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 katharina@meyer-reumann.com.

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