

Marriage Registration Procedure

Beirut, October 2014



Marriage Registration Procedure for Syrians Marrying in Lebanon

Step 1 – Contracting the Marriage

1.1 Conditions for a Valid Marriage

- **Age** – Each religious confession specifies the age at which persons can marry automatically (without authorisation) and the minimum age at which it is necessary to secure authorisation to marry from parents and the competent religious authority.

Confession	Minimum Age of Marriage (Requires Authorisation)		Minimum Age of Marriage (Without Authorisation)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sunni	17	9	18	17
Shi'a	Puberty	9	15	9

- **Kinship** – The requirements regarding degrees of kinship, affinity, or breastfeeding relationship vary from one confession to another and couples should ask the relevant religious authority for further information.
- **Marital Status** – All confessions forbid women from marrying more than one man. Polygamy is allowed for Muslim men.
- **No Contagious or Congenital Diseases** – All confessions require medical certificates confirming the good health of the couple.
- **Difference of Worship** – Marriages between Muslims and Christians are permitted in Lebanon, although a Muslim woman will not be able to marry a Christian man through the Shari'a Court. However, the Lebanese authorities will not register the marriage of a Syrian Muslim woman to a Syrian Christian man as these marriages are not recognised in Syria.

1.2 The Permission to Marry (*'Izen Shar'i*)

- Couples need to obtain permission to marry from the competent religious authority (Sunni or Ja'fari Shari'a Court). This confirms that the conditions to contract the marriage are met.
- Documents required for the permission to marry are:
 - (1) Individual civil extracts issued within the past three months. As well as proving the identity of the couple, this confirms that there are no impediments to the marriage such as difference of worship or marital status.
 - (2) Medical certificates confirming that there are no medical impediments to the conclusion of the marriage. The medical certificate should be issued by an accredited doctor of the Shari'a Court. The cost is around 150,000 LBP.
 - (3) In the case of a Syrian woman marrying a Lebanese man, authorisation from the General Directorate of General Security may be required. This authorisation may take up to two months.

1.3 Competent Sheikh for Contracting the Marriage

- For Sunni – Once the permission to marry is issued, the Sunni Shari'a Court will authorise a sheikh to contract the marriage. The marriage may be contracted in any locality.
- For Shi'a – A sheikh in any locality. All Shi'a sheikhs are authorised to contract marriages.

1.4 The Marriage Ceremony and Authentication of the Marriage Contract

- The marriage should be concluded publicly and have witnesses. Following the marriage ceremony, the marriage contract must be signed and stamped by the relevant religious authority (Sunni or Ja'fari Shari'a Court).

Step 2 – The Mukhtar Marriage Certificate

- Couples should visit a mukhtar working locally to the place where the marriage contract was authenticated for the marriage certificate.
- The following documents are usually required by the mukhtar: (1) the authenticated marriage contract; and (2) the identity documents of the spouses (Syrian ID cards, passports or individual civil extracts).
- The mukhtar will require the marriage certificate to be signed by the husband and two witnesses. The marriage certificate will also have to be signed by the religious authority that contracted the marriage. The mukhtar will then sign and stamp the marriage certificate.
- The fee for finalising the marriage certificate varies; some mukhtars will not charge for this service while others may ask for 30,000 LBP or more.

Step 3 – Registering the Marriage with the Department for Foreigners at the Personal Status Department

- After obtaining the marriage certificate from the mukhtar, the couple must register the marriage with the Personal Status Department. This involves two steps.

3.1 Visiting the Local Civil Registry

- Firstly, the couple must visit the local civil registry (*kalam noufous*) in the district of the marriage. The local civil registry will ‘transfer’ the marriage certificate.
- At the local civil registry, the couple must present the mukhtar marriage certificate. The practice of different civil registries varies, but they should accept to ‘transfer’ the marriage certificate even if couple has limited supporting documentation and lack proof of valid stay.
- The local civil registry will charge 1,000 LBP x 4 for the stamps required for the marriage certificate (an additional 1,000 LBP after 30 days of the marriage).

3.2 Visiting the Personal Status Department

- Secondly, the couple must visit the Personal Status Department (*deirat noufous*) in the governorate where the marriage took place.¹ Couples should not delay in registering the marriage at the Personal Status Department.
- The following documents must be presented: (1) the mukhtar marriage certificate; (2) the identity documents of the couple (either the individual civil extract stamped by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lebanon and in Syria and issued within the past three months or valid passports); and (3) evidence of valid stay such as a return coupon.
- The marriage certificate will be stamped and the marriage registered in the Foreigners Register. The Personal Status Department charges a small amount to certify copies of documents and to provide the couple with the copy of the official marriage certificate.

Step 4 – When the time comes for safe and voluntary return

- Syrians are **not** advised to approach the Syrian authorities at the present time. However, when the time comes for **safe and voluntary return to Syria** the spouses will need to do the following: (1) visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lebanon to have the official marriage certificate stamped (1,000 LBP); and (2) approach the Syrian Embassy with the official marriage certificate and their identity documents.

¹ Personal Status Departments are as follows: (1) Beirut: Ministry of Interior, Hamra; (2) Mount Lebanon: Serail Baabda; (3) South: Serail Saida; (4) Nabatiyeh: Serail Nabatiyeh; (5) Bekaa: Serail Zahle; and (6) North Lebanon: Serail Tripoli.