The United Arab Emirates (UAE) leadership has revised its laws built on the norms of Islam. On November 7, 2020, President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, approved changes in several legal acts in order. As he himself said to consolidate the principles of tolerance in society and strengthen the country's position as a center for work and life. How has the UAE legislation changed? What prompted the UAE authorities to take this step? Is it justified? What will this decision lead the country into?

One of the most significant changes in the new laws is that in regards to inheritance and divorce the laws of where the person originates can be applied. This means that Sharia or Islamic law will not always be used for family and civil law cases involving expatriates. The introduction of these measures in the UAE has been repeatedly discussed over the past few years. The updates in the UAE legislation reflect an essential milestone in the ongoing improvement of the legal system of this Arab country.

Henceforth, the citizenship of the testator will determine how his property will be divided among the heirs by law if the testator has not written a will. Under the old legislation, the property of the deceased was automatically divided according to Sharia law. The only exception will be property purchased in the UAE, which will be managed under the laws of the UAE.
The changes affected the procedures for divorce, separation of spouses, and the division of jointly acquired property in the event of divorce. Suppose the couple is married in the same country but decided to divorce in the UAE. In that case, the state's laws in which the marriage was concluded will apply. The new laws mention such concepts as joint assets and joint accounts. They also state that a court can be brought in to mediate if there is no settlement agreement between the two parties.

In the UAE, the murder of a woman by a male relative under the pretext of protecting her honor has ceased to be considered mitigating circumstances. Under the old laws, a man who kills a relative supposedly disgraced his family could be given a relatively short sentence. Also, for men who harass women and harass them on the street, additional responsibility measures have been introduced. The death penalty is now imposed for the act of raping a minor or a mentally ill person.

Another notable innovation in the UAE legislation is the abolition of penalties for alcohol consumption. Now, UAE citizens and foreigners over the age of 21 can consume, store or sell alcoholic beverages without restrictions in their homes and authorized public places. Previously, the consumption of alcoholic beverages without obtaining a special state license was prosecuted by law.

The updated legislation allows unmarried couples to live together. Previously, cohabitation before marriage and the cohabitation of persons not related by blood was considered a crime. Foreigners were rarely prosecuted for this, but there were still cases of criminal prosecution for civil marriage. As for the residents, the UAE law enforcement authorities were cautious to ensure that they complied with this law.

An article on responsibility for a failed suicide attempt has been extracted from the Criminal Code. Law enforcement and judicial authorities are now required to provide psychological assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population.

The main reason for these reforms was the desire of the UAE leadership to make its state more modern and attractive for foreigners. The economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic has been an irreparable blow to the tourism sector in all countries. Tourism is the second source of replenishment of the UAE budget after oil exports. The UAE authorities have made its legislation to become more liberal to compensate for the financial losses by attracting as many foreigners as possible. In October 2021, Dubai hosts the World Exhibition, According to some reports, will attract up to 25 million foreigners to the UAE.

The second important reason is the cultural and economic relations with Israel that began in September 2020. On March 20, 2021, the first kosher Israeli restaurant called Mul Ha-Yam (Opposite the sea) opened in Dubai, the largest city in the UAE. On March 21, the UAE and Israel national rugby teams held their first friendly game in the two countries' history. Israeli society, despite its purity, is more relaxed and Westernized. The number of Israeli citizens in the UAE is growing every day, and legislation has been modernized to make them feel calmer and safer.

The third reason is the growing consciousness of UAE citizens and their desire to live in a modern way.

Progressive decisions are always justified. The leadership of the UAE has recognized the fact that to be a full member of the international community; it is necessary to carry out reforms and improve legislation. The gradual rejection of Islamic law and Sharia norms will help the UAE become a more modern country.

Other states may soon follow the positive example of the UAE in the Middle East. In Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, and many other countries in the region, movements of feminists and people who advocate significant social change are gaining momentum. The leaders of these countries should sooner or later listen to the most progressive groups of the population and implement reforms.

In conclusion, it could be said that social progress cannot be stopped. Thanks to the Internet and the media, more and more people can follow what is happening globally and make independent conclusions. People living in the Middle East are no exception. At some point, Dar al-Islam countries will finally abandon the norms and traditions that have lost their relevance and will be able to fully develop economically and culturally.

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