

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2014 10:47

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

All,

Thanks very much for your speed and flexibility on this.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Senior Press Officer (Crisis and Consular) | Media Office
Foreign & Commonwealth Office | W.G.7 | King Charles Street | London SW1A 2AH
Tel: [REDACTED] | www.gov.uk/fco

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2014 09:53

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for coming back so quickly on this.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Consular Policy Adviser (Children and Young People) | Consular Directorate | Foreign
and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH
e-mail: [REDACTED]

We welcome your feedback on our services, please email us at:
feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2014 09:05

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: FW: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

All,

Apologies for the delay, I was travelling yesterday and did not see the message. I'm happy with the line, and we will update the "living in" section of the website asap.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *British Vice Consul | British Embassy | PO Box 65 | Dubai | United Arab Emirates*
[REDACTED]

UAE Travel Advice.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 July 2014 00:25
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: July 29, 2014 at 7:26:36 PM GMT+4
To: <[REDACTED]>
Cc: <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

As discussed, I've changed the wording below slightly to reflect the language used in our online guide. The first change is a bit wordy so happy for this to be edited or improved by others.

[REDACTED] - I'm really sorry to disturb you over Eid but I would be very grateful for your input/signoff on these lines. Press Office would like to go back to the journalist tomorrow. Are you happy that these lines reflect the UAE approach to divorce and custody cases for foreign nationals? If you are happy, I'd be grateful if you could update the 'Living in UAE' guide accordingly.

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Consular Policy Adviser (Children and Young People) | Consular Directorate | Foreign and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH
[REDACTED]

We welcome your feedback on our services, please email us at:
feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2014 16:07
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

[REDACTED]

Given the very low number of cases which have been reported to us re. Sharia law and divorces, but the increasing media profile, could we add a sentence to the 'living in' guide (in the section on 'Social ethics and traditions in UAE') – something like:

"You should be aware that the UAE Personal Affairs Law, which is based on Islamic principles, can apply to foreign nationals in child custody and divorce cases."

That would allow me to go back to the journalist to say

"We are aware of a very small number of divorce cases involving British nationals in the UAE where the courts have applied aspects of UAE law which are based on Islamic principles."

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides a range of advice for British nationals looking to travel or live overseas. This includes travel advice (designed to alert British nationals to threats) and 'Living In...' guides (which provide a more general view of the customs of a country). Both of these are available for the UAE.

"The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also provides advice on specific types of available consular assistance, such as child abduction, arrest overseas and bereavement. For the UAE, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has also provided detailed advice on child custody cases."

"All of this information is made publicly available on www.gov.uk."

["We intend to update our 'Living in the UAE' guide to reflect the use of UAE Personal Affairs Law – which is based on Islamic principles - in child custody and divorce cases."]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Senior Press Officer (Crisis and Consular) | Media Office
Foreign & Commonwealth Office | W.G.7 | King Charles Street | London SW1A 2AH

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2014 11:22
To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

[REDACTED] is travelling back to UAE currently and back at post tomorrow so I have sent this to his BB as he may check that beforehand.

[REDACTED] | Consular Desk Officer for South Africa | Desk Officer for Child Abduction: Middle East & Africa | Consular Assistance | WH 4.9 | King Charles Street | Foreign & Commonwealth Office | London SW1A 2AH | [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

If an email reply is overdue please telephone the above number.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2014 11:04
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

Hi all,

In addition to the general travel advice we also have specific public information on child abduction and custody cases in UAE:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/147862/Child_Abduction_UAE.pdf

This explains that:

UAE Personal Affairs Law, which is based on Islamic principles, applies in custody dispute cases. Under Personal Affairs Law, after divorce proceedings take place Muslim mothers keep custody of girls under thirteen years old and boys under eleven years old. After this, custody may be transferred to the father or the father's family if directed by the Sharia court unless the court believes extending the age limit is for the benefit of the child. If the mother is found to be 'incompetent', if her behaviour is considered to be inconsistent with Islamic faith or if she remarries, the courts will decide NOT to award her custody.

With respect to non-Muslims, the law of the child's birth place applies in so far as it does not conflict with federal local laws. Foreign nationals are able to ask for their case to be heard under the law of their country of origin when the case is first presented. But the law of their own country cannot be applied (or used to challenge a verdict) once the case has started in t

Rather than add in new text I suggest we review this information and link it to the "living in" guide so that it is easier for people to find. I'm not aware of any specific information given about divorce proceedings in UAE though. I have copied in [REDACTED] who might be able to point us in the right direction.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Consular Policy Adviser (Children and Young People) | Consular Directorate | Foreign and Commonwealth Office | King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH

We welcome your feedback on our services, please email us at:
feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2014 10:20
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

Hi all - I had discussed this previously with [REDACTED]

I have cc'd [REDACTED] in incase she also wants to feed into this as well.

[REDACTED] | Consular Desk Officer for South Africa | Desk Officer for Child Abduction: Middle East & Africa | Consular Assistance | WH 4.9 | King Charles Street | Foreign & Commonwealth Office | London SW1A 2AH

If an email reply is overdue please telephone the above number.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2014 10:11
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

I'm copying to [REDACTED] who owns the UAE travel advice. We could consider language for the local laws and customs section, but as I understand it what you're considering is inserting a warning to British women that if they become involved in divorce proceedings in the UAE, they need to be aware that Sharia law might be applied. If so, it might be more appropriate for the 'Living In' guide.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 July 2014 17:12
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: UAE: travel advice and Sharia law

Hi both,

BBC Asian Network have been in touch. They are looking for a short statement on the use of Sharia law in the UAE by expat husbands looking to get a better deal in the divorce courts. They have been interviewing women who have been affected – some quite badly (e.g. domestic violence, losing custody of their children). [REDACTED]

The women have complained that our travel advice doesn't mention the possibility of expats having access to Sharia law, and that some of them wouldn't have moved to the UAE if they'd known.

The key elements they would like us to address in a statement are:

Are we aware of cases where this has happened?

Is this a significant problem/issue?

Are we going to change our travel advice?

I'd also like to take the opportunity to highlight the full range of advice on offer to British nationals living overseas (not just travel advice – also 'living abroad' pamphlet, Post website, Post and FCO social media activity, etc).

Grateful for your thoughts tomorrow (Tuesday).

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Senior Press Officer (Crisis and Consular) | Media Office
Foreign & Commonwealth Office | W.G.7 | King Charles Street | London SW1A 2AH
[REDACTED]