

Bahrain lacks family code

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Laws governing divorce fees, alimony, child support, child custody, visitation rights and division of conjugal property between divorced Bahraini couples are just some of the most important issues that need to be addressed under a Family Code that Bahrain severely lacks according to women's activist and Al Wefaq bloc member, Afaf Aljamri.

The women's rights advocate admits that even this time and age, women are still suffering social injustices based on their gender.

"Any divorced Bahraini woman will tell you that she lost virtually everything after her husband divorced her. This includes a fair share in their marital home, dowry, other conjugal properties and whatever insurance policies they hold. This also includes the worst nightmare for every mother when she is barred from seeing or visiting her children. The female divorcee is likely to end up on the streets if she does not have any living parents or relatives," explained Afaf Aljamri.

"Because of the power and control the husband possesses over his wife, he can also compel her to pay for their divorce. The husband would subject her to all forms of abuse, physical or otherwise to make her agree. In the end, the woman has no choice but to do as he asks and eventually, she loses everything in process," she said.

The implementation of Bahrain's Family Code, she believes will address the important issues that have long been overlooked for years.

"Bahrain has reached levels where our women have been given equal opportunities in terms of access to education, medical facilities, training provisions and work opportunities. However, Bahrain's constitutions' greatest failure lies in guaranteeing a normal life for a mother and her children after a failed marriage. Theoretically, even under the Islamic teachings there is much reverence placed on the family life even after a divorce."

"Women and mothers should acquire constitutional guarantee that their children and their own rights are protected. The proposal for the Family Code has been in place for years but our lawmakers have repeatedly declined it. The laws and provisions have been drafted but nobody seems to be interested in passing it as a law," she concluded.