



NATIONAL REGISTRATION BUREAU

PUBLIC STATEMENT

REQUIREMENTS FOR A VALID MARRIAGE IN MALAWI

The National Registration Bureau (NRB) wishes to inform the public of the requirements and processes for contracting a valid marriage under the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act (MDFRA) 2025. The Bureau advises that, for any marriage to be valid, all the processes prescribed by law must be followed in full (Sections 17–47).

These include giving notice of the intention to marry, observing the prescribed notice of marriage period, which is 21 days, resolving any objections that may arise, obtaining the requisite permit, and conducting the marriage ceremony before a legally authorized officiant at a duly licensed venue.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO OFFICIATE AND REGISTER MARRIAGES

The Registrar of Marriages delegated the authority to officiate and register marriages to District Commissioners for Civil Marriages, Religious Clerks for Religious Marriages and gazetted Traditional Authorities for Traditional Marriages.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MARRY

Both parties intending to marry must appear in person before their chosen Registrar (officiant) and complete the prescribed Notice of Marriage (Sections 19 and 27). Upon receipt of the notice, the registrar is required to enter the notice in the Marriage Notice Book and publicly display the notice (Sections 22 and 23).

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF MARRIAGE

After registering the intention to marry, the Registrar must display the notice on a noticeboard for a period of 21 days. This is to allow any person with lawful grounds to object to the proposed marriage lodge a caveat (Section 30). Where an objection is lodged, the matter must be resolved by the parties concerned or court of law before the process can proceed (Section 30(2)). If no objection is raised within the prescribed period, or if the court dismisses the objection, the registrar may issue a Registrar's Permit

authorizing the marriage to take place (Section 24). Under special circumstances, the Minister responsible may waive the 21-day period upon application by the parties.

LICENSED VENUE OR PLACE OF MARRIAGE

The Bureau reminds the public that marriage officiation must only be conducted at venues licensed in accordance with the law (Sections 26 and 39). In the case of religious marriages, the place of worship where the officiation is to take place must hold a valid license (Section 11). For Civil and Traditional marriages, officiation will take place at the Council Offices and Traditional Authorities headquarters or offices respectively.

Where parties want to have their marriage officiated elsewhere other than a licensed place of worship, councils or Traditional Authorities' offices e.g. events garden, a special license is issued by the Minister responsible upon request otherwise the marriage will be invalid.

PLACES OF WORSHIP AND OFFICIATION OF MARRIAGES

The NRB would like to notify the public that only religious institutions registered under the Trustees Incorporation Act and licensed under the MDFRA or any other applicable law can officiate marriages at their licensed place of worship and as such the institutions must comply with the regulations.

The NRB urges the public to fully comply with these legal requirements for the three types of marriages: Civil, Religious and Traditional. Members of the public seeking detailed legal provisions may consult the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, 2025 or contact the NRB for guidance through: Call Centre: 0111 700 700 or 488 (TNM Only); WhatsApp: 0987 074 071 or 0987 074 073; email: info@nrb.gov.mw callcentre@nrb.gov.mw.



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