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Lebanese president wants ban on civil marriage lifted



Lebanese President Michel Sleiman on Sunday expressed support for a law allowing for civil marriage, currently illegal in the country, saying it will help build unity in the multi-faith Middle Eastern country. “We should work on drafting a civil marriage law. It is a very important step in eradicating sectarianism and solidifying national unity,” Sleiman wrote in Arabic and English on his Facebook page. His views appeared alongside a photo of a man carrying his daughter on his shoulders at a rally. She is seen holding a stuffed animal and a sign reading “civil marriage, not civil war.” After only four hours online, Sleiman’s post garnered more than 1,700 likes and provoked a string of comments, overwhelmingly in favor of the law. Famed Lebanese singer Elissa tweeted: “Might civil marriage encourage our politicians not to hide behind their fingers and enrich diversity in our beloved country.” Despite a long-running campaign by civil groups, such weddings still have no legal basis in Lebanon, a tiny country of around four million people who belong to 18 different religious communities, mainly Christian and Muslim.