

Summary Report

Summary: Analytical Overview of Femicide Reporting in Kenya (January 1–31, 2024)

1 Published by the Media Council of Kenya, Research Planning and Strategy Department.*

This report examines media coverage of femicide in Kenya during January 2024, highlighting trends, ethical concerns, and the role of media in addressing gender-based violence. Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has seen a disturbing rise in Kenya, with over 500 cases reported between 2016 and 2023. The report analyzes media adherence to ethical standards, legal frameworks, and the broader societal implications of femicide.

Key Findings:

1 . **Rising Femicide Cases**:

- 1 January 2024 saw a spike in femicide cases, including high-profile murders of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni.
- 1 Data from OdipoDev.com reveals recurring patterns, with stabbing, hacking, and strangulation as common methods.
- 1 Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties reported the highest incidents, though underreporting in other regions remains a challenge.

2. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 The media played a critical role in agenda-setting, sustaining public discourse, and pressuring authorities to act.
- 1 Broadcast and digital media platforms extensively covered femicide, with hashtags like #EndFemicideKE trending.
- 1 Panel discussions featured experts, including psychologists and human rights activists, to address root causes and advocate for systemic change.

3. **Ethical Concerns**:

- 1 Some media outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensationalism, victim-blaming, and insensitive reporting.
- 1 Insensitive headlines and graphic details in print media (e.g., Taifa Leo and The Star) violated the Code of Conduct for Kenyan journalists, particularly regarding intrusion into grief and shock.

4. ****Legal and Institutional Frameworks****:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act and international conventions like CEDAW, provide a robust legal framework to combat gender-based violence.
- 1 Despite this, gaps in enforcement and slow legal processes hinder justice for victims.
- 1 Institutions like FIDA Kenya and the National Gender and Equality Commission condemned the rise in femicide and called for urgent action.

5. ****Public and Institutional Response****:

- 1 Civil society organizations, religious leaders, and women parliamentarians urged the government to declare femicide a national disaster.
- 1 The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife introduced measures to regulate short-term rental accommodations (e.g., Airbnb) following femicide cases linked to such facilities.

Conclusion:

The media's role in reporting femicide was pivotal in raising awareness and driving public discourse. While many outlets adhered to ethical standards, sensationalism and insensitivity in some cases undermined professionalism. The report calls for stricter adherence to journalistic ethics, sustained advocacy, and government action to address the systemic issues fueling femicide.

The Media Council of Kenya emphasizes the need for balanced, sensitive, and accurate reporting to combat gender-based violence effectively.