

Summary Report

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

The Media Council of Kenya's report provides a comprehensive analysis of femicide reporting in Kenya during January 2024, highlighting the media's role in addressing gender-based violence. Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has seen a worrying rise in Kenya, with 150 cases reported in 2023 and at least 10 cases in January 2024 alone. High-profile cases, such as the murders of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni, have sparked national outrage and calls for action.

Key Findings:

1. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 The media played a critical role in agenda-setting, sustaining public discourse on femicide through consistent reporting, panel discussions, and expert interviews.
- 1 Broadcast and digital media platforms amplified voices from human rights groups, activists, and religious leaders, fostering awareness and advocacy.
- 1 However, some outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, The Star, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting, violating journalistic ethics.

2. **Legal Framework**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act and international conventions like CEDAW, provide a robust legal framework to address gender-based violence. However, gaps in implementation and enforcement persist.
- 1 The government's slow response to femicide cases has raised concerns about its commitment to protecting women's rights.

3. **Patterns and Trends**:

- 1 Data from OdipoDev.com revealed over 500 femicide cases between 2016 and 2023, with intimate partner violence and stranger killings being predominant. Methods included stabbing, strangulation, and extreme acts like beheading and burning.
- 1 Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties reported the highest incidences, though underreporting in other regions suggests a nationwide issue.

4. **Ethical Concerns**:

- 1 Some media outlets engaged in victim-blaming and sensationalism, breaching the Code of Conduct for Kenyan journalists. Examples included insensitive headlines and discussions that trivialized the victims' experiences.
- 1 The Media Council called for adherence to ethical standards, emphasizing sensitivity, accuracy, and respect for victims' dignity.

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

- 1 Civil society organizations, women's groups, and religious leaders condemned the rise in femicide, urging the government to declare it a national disaster.
- 1 The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife and the Ministry of Interior took steps to regulate short-term rental accommodations, addressing security concerns highlighted by recent cases.

Conclusion:

The media's coverage of femicide in January 2024 was largely focused and consistent, setting the agenda for public discourse and policy action. While many outlets adhered to ethical standards, some fell short, necessitating stricter adherence to journalistic codes. The report underscores the need for sustained media advocacy, government action, and public awareness to combat femicide and gender-based violence in Kenya.

Recommendations:

- 1 Media outlets should prioritize ethical, sensitive, and accurate reporting on femicide.
- 1 The government must expedite investigations and prosecutions of femicide cases and implement preventive measures.
- 1 Stakeholders, including civil society and the media, should collaborate to address the root causes of gender-based violence and promote gender equality.