

Summary Report

Summary: Analytical Overview of Femicide Reporting in Kenya (January 2024)

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Introduction

Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has surged in Kenya, prompting national outcry. The Media Council of Kenya analyzed media coverage of femicide cases from January 1 to 31, 2024, to assess adherence to journalistic ethics and identify gaps in reporting.

Key Findings

1. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 Media played a critical role in setting the agenda, with sustained coverage of high-profile cases like Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni.
- 1 Broadcast and print media facilitated public discourse, hosting panel discussions with experts and amplifying voices of human rights groups, activists, and religious leaders.
- 1 However, some outlets (e.g., Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, The Star, Kiss FM) were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting, including victim-blaming and graphic details.

2. **Legal Framework**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act and international treaties like CEDAW, provide robust protections against gender-based violence.
- 1 Despite this, gaps in enforcement and preventive measures persist, with slow investigations and limited accountability for perpetrators.

3. **Data and Trends**:

- 1 Over 500 femicide cases were recorded between 2016 and 2023, with 2018 marking the highest number.

- 1 Intimate partner violence and stranger killings were predominant, with methods including stabbing, strangulation, and extreme acts like beheading.
- 1 Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties reported the highest incidents, though underreporting in other regions skews the data.

4. **Ethical Concerns**:

- 1 Sensational headlines and explicit descriptions of violence breached the Code of Conduct for Kenyan journalists, particularly clauses on intrusion into grief and shock.
- 1 Some media outlets failed to maintain accuracy, fairness, and sensitivity, undermining public trust.

5. **Public and Institutional Response**:

- 1 Civil society organizations, women's groups, and religious leaders condemned the killings, calling for urgent action.
- 1 The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife and Airbnb addressed security concerns in short-term rentals following the murders.

Conclusion

While the media effectively raised awareness and pressured authorities to act, ethical lapses in reporting highlighted the need for stricter adherence to professional standards. The Media Council emphasized the importance of balanced, sensitive, and accurate coverage to combat femicide and uphold public trust.

Recommendations

- 1 Media outlets should prioritize ethical reporting, avoiding sensationalism and victim-blaming.
- 1 Government agencies must expedite investigations and enforce laws to protect women.
- 1 Stakeholders should collaborate to address systemic issues like gender inequality and harmful social norms.

This report underscores the media's pivotal role in addressing femicide while calling for accountability and professionalism in reporting.