

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 the role of the media in addressing gender-based violence and identifying gaps in reporting. Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has seen a troubling rise in Kenya, with over 500 cases reported between 2016 and 2023. The report analyzes legal frameworks, media content, and ethical considerations in reporting femicide.

Key Findings:

1 . **Legal Framework**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act (2006) and international conventions like CEDAW, provide robust protections against gender-based violence. However, gaps in enforcement and preventive measures persist.
- 1 The Penal Code inadequately addresses sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and government responses to femicide have been slow and insufficient.

2. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 The media played a critical role in raising awareness and setting the agenda on femicide, with sustained coverage of high-profile cases like Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni.
- 1 Broadcast and digital media platforms hosted panel discussions, engaged experts, and amplified voices from human rights groups, activists, and religious leaders.
- 1 However, some outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting, including victim-blaming and intrusive coverage of victims' families.

3. **Content Analysis**:

- 1 Broadcast media provided extensive coverage of femicide cases, with TV and radio stations like Citizen TV, NTV, and Classic 105 leading discussions on the issue.
- 1 Print media, particularly Taifa Leo and The Star, were flagged for sensational headlines and explicit descriptions of violent acts, violating ethical guidelines on grief and shock.

- 1 Digital media saw hashtags like #EndFemicideKE and #SilencingWomen trending, reflecting public outrage and calls for justice.

4. **Ethical Concerns**:

- 1 The Media Council of Kenya emphasized the need for adherence to the Code of Conduct for Journalists, particularly regarding sensitivity, accuracy, and respect for victims' dignity.
- 1 Instances of unethical reporting included victim-shaming, intrusive coverage, and failure to verify facts, undermining public trust in media professionalism.

5. **Institutional Responses**:

- 1 Organizations like FIDA Kenya, the Zamara Foundation, and Usikimye condemned femicide and called for systemic changes.
- 1 Government ministries, including Tourism and Interior, initiated measures to regulate short-term rental accommodations (e.g., Airbnb) to enhance safety.

Conclusion:

The media's role in reporting femicide was pivotal in driving public discourse and demanding accountability. While coverage was largely accurate and balanced, ethical lapses highlighted the need for stricter adherence to journalistic standards. The report calls for continued collaboration between media, civil society, and government to address the root causes of femicide and ensure justice for victims.

Recommendations:

- 1 Media outlets should prioritize ethical reporting, avoiding sensationalism and respecting victims' dignity.
- 1 Stakeholders must strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to combat femicide effectively.
- 1 Public awareness campaigns and support systems for victims of gender-based violence should be expanded.

This report underscores the urgency of addressing femicide as a national crisis and the media's responsibility to report on it with integrity and sensitivity.