

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, legal frameworks, and ethical challenges in reporting. Femicide, defined as the intentional killing of women because of their gender, has seen a sharp rise in Kenya, with over 500 cases documented between 2016 and 2023. The report underscores the media's critical role in raising awareness, setting agendas, and pressuring authorities to act, while also addressing lapses in ethical reporting.

Key Findings:

1 . **Rising Femicide Cases**:

- 1 January 2024 saw a surge 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 skews data.

2. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 Broadcast and print media extensively covered femicide, with over 146 reports in January.
- 1 Coverage included panel discussions, expert interviews, and follow-ups, but some outlets sensationalized stories or engaged in victim-blaming.
- 1 Ethical breaches were noted, particularly in vernacular radio stations and print media, which published graphic details and insensitive headlines.

3. **Legal Framework**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act and Children's Act, provide robust protections against gender-based violence.
- 1 International treaties like CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol further obligate Kenya to address femicide.

1 Despite these frameworks, gaps in enforcement and slow legal processes hinder justice for victims.

4. ****Public and Institutional Response****:

- 1 Civil society groups, activists, and religious leaders condemned the killings, calling for urgent action.
- 1 The government initiated measures to regulate short-term rental accommodations (e.g., Airbnb) following femicide incidents.
- 1 Social media campaigns like #EndFemicideKE and #TotalShutdownKE amplified calls for justice and systemic change.

5. ****Ethical Concerns****:

- 1 Some media outlets violated the Code of Conduct for Kenyan Journalists by publishing gory details, intruding on grief, and failing to verify facts.
- 1 Examples include Taifa Leo's sensational headlines and Kiss FM's insensitive remarks about suspects.

Conclusion:

The media played a pivotal role in highlighting femicide, fostering public discourse, and advocating for accountability. However, ethical lapses and sensationalism undermined its credibility. The report calls for adherence to journalistic standards, sustained focus on systemic issues, and collaboration among stakeholders to combat femicide effectively.

Recommendations:

- 1 Strengthen enforcement of existing laws and policies.
- 1 Enhance media training on ethical reporting of gender-based violence.
- 1 Improve data collection and reporting mechanisms to address underreporting.
- 1 Foster partnerships between media, government, and civil society to drive long-term solutions.

This analysis serves as a guide for improving media coverage and addressing the root causes of femicide in Kenya.