

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 the media 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 over 500 cases reported between 2016 and 2023. The report emphasizes the media's critical role in shaping public discourse, setting agendas, and advocating for justice, while also critiquing instances of sensationalism and unethical reporting.

Key Findings:

1 . **Rising Femicide Cases**:

- 1 At least 10 women were killed in January 2024, with Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru counties reporting the highest incidents.
- 1 Common methods include stabbing, hacking, strangulation, and extreme acts like beheading and burning.
- 1 Intimate partner violence and stranger killings are prevalent, with firearms often used by perpetrators linked to law enforcement.

2. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 The media played a pivotal role in raising awareness, with over 146 reports on femicide in January 2024.
- 1 Broadcast and digital media platforms, including TV, radio, and social media, amplified voices of human rights groups, activists, and experts.
- 1 Hashtags like #EndFemicideKE and #SilencingWomen trended, sparking national conversations and protests.

3. **Ethical Concerns**:

- 1 Some media outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting.

- 1 Instances of victim-blaming and graphic descriptions of violence violated the Code of Conduct for Kenyan journalists.
- 1 Print media headlines were particularly criticized for their insensitivity and intrusion into grief.

4. **Legal and Policy Context**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and laws, including the Sexual Offences Act and international treaties like CEDAW, provide a robust legal framework against gender-based violence.
- 1 However, gaps in enforcement, slow investigations, and inadequate preventive measures persist.

5. **Media's Role in Advocacy**:

- 1 The media facilitated panel discussions with experts, including psychologists and legal professionals, to address root causes and advocate for systemic change.
- 1 Coverage of high-profile cases, such as the murders of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni, prompted government action, including stricter regulations for short-term rental accommodations.

Recommendations:

- 1 **Media Accountability**: Journalists must adhere to ethical standards, avoiding sensationalism and respecting victims' dignity.
- 1 **Government Action**: Enhanced enforcement of laws, faster investigations, and preventive measures are needed to address femicide.
- 1 **Public Awareness**: Continued media efforts to educate the public on gender-based violence and support systems for victims are crucial.

Conclusion:

While the media has been instrumental in highlighting femicide and advocating for justice, ethical lapses and sensationalism undermine its credibility. The report calls for a balanced, professional approach to reporting, coupled with stronger government action to combat this pervasive issue.

1 References:

- 1 UN Women, WHO, and Kenyan legal frameworks, including the Constitution and Sexual Offences Act.
- 1 Media Council of Kenya's Code of Conduct for Journalists.
- 1 Data from OdipoDev.com and Femicide Count Kenya.
- 1 Prepared by the Media Council of Kenya, Research Planning and Strategy Department.*

