

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 documented between 2016 and 2023. The report analyzes media adherence to ethical standards, legal frameworks, and the broader societal implications of femicide.

Key Findings:

1 . **Rising Femicide Cases**:

- 1 At least 10 femicide cases were reported in January 2024, 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. Intimate partners and strangers are primary perpetrators, with law enforcement-linked cases involving firearms.

2. **Media Coverage**:

- 1 The media played a critical role in agenda-setting, sustaining public discourse, and pressuring authorities to act.
- 1 Broadcast and digital media platforms extensively covered femicide, with hashtags like #EndFemicideKE trending.
- 1 However, some outlets, including Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, and Kiss FM, were criticized for sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive reporting, including victim-blaming and graphic details.

3. **Legal and Ethical Analysis**:

- 1 Kenya's Constitution and international conventions, such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, provide robust legal protections against gender-based violence.
- 1 Despite this, gaps in enforcement and preventive measures persist, with slow investigations and underreporting of cases.

- 1 The Media Council emphasized adherence to the Code of Conduct for Journalism, particularly regarding sensitivity, accuracy, and respect for victims' dignity.

4. ****Content Analysis****:

- 1 Broadcast media hosted panel discussions with experts, including psychologists, activists, and legal professionals, to address root causes and advocate for systemic change.
- 1 Print and digital media often used sensational headlines, breaching ethical guidelines on intrusion into grief and shock.
- 1 Follow-up coverage on investigations and autopsies provided updates but sometimes lacked sensitivity.

5. ****Institutional Responses****:

- 1 Organizations like FIDA Kenya, the Zamara Foundation, and Usikimye condemned femicide and called for action.
- 1 The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife and Airbnb responded to security concerns in short-term rentals, proposing regulatory measures.

Conclusion:

The media's role in reporting femicide was pivotal in raising awareness and driving public discourse. While many outlets adhered to ethical standards, some fell short, necessitating stricter adherence to the Code of Conduct. The report calls for sustained media engagement, improved legal enforcement, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to combat femicide effectively.

Recommendations:

- 1 Media outlets should prioritize ethical reporting, avoiding sensationalism and victim-blaming.
- 1 Government agencies must expedite investigations and implement preventive measures.
- 1 Civil society and media should continue advocating for systemic changes to address the root causes of gender-based violence.

This report underscores the urgent need for collective action to protect women's rights and ensure justice for victims of femicide in Kenya.

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