

AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF FEMICIDE REPORTING IN KENYA

January 1st to January 31st 2024



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FOREWARD

The World Health Organisation defines femicide as “intentional murder of women because they are women.”

Rising cases of femicide in Kenya have brought to the fore the underlying and ongoing violations on the rights of women. Data from both local and international organisations reveal the dire need for intervention by all stakeholders including the media.

As a critical player in mitigation and prevention of femicide, the media has risen to the occasion by reporting on the many cases, thus applying pressure on responsible government organs to act.



The right to life of any human being, male or female, is inalienable. It is not a privilege but a guarantee, which is protected under various international statutes and in this context, the Constitution of Kenya.

Article 26(3) determines that a person shall not be deprived of life intentionally, except to the extent authorised by the Constitution or other written law. The previous section guarantees the right to life. Therefore, in the face of rising cases of femicide, there is need for reflection on the mandate of the media in combating femicide.

The public learned about femicide via the media, both digital and legacy. The media set the agenda. It ensured sustained coverage of femicide cases across all news platforms and hosted panels discussions, this way sustaining calls for action. The media managed to deliver on this in a professional manner, while at the same time, responding to the demand to familiarize itself with existing laws and guidelines.

However, a number of stations such as Anguo FM, Taifa Leo, The Star and Kiss FM have been cited for unprofessional reporting of femicide, specifically relaying inaccurate, insensitive, and sensational content.

The Media Council published the following critique on coverage of femicide in its weekly publication, The Media Observer:

1. <https://mediaobserver.co.ke/index.php/2021/09/13/on-femicide-we-have-taliban-style-reporting-in-our-news-desks/>
2. <https://mediaobserver.co.ke/index.php/2024/02/12/ethics-spare-families-audiences-gory-details-of-brutal-murders/>
3. <https://mediaobserver.co.ke/index.php/2024/01/29/dear-media-stop-cheering-on-killers-of-women/>

In the year, 2021, The Media Observer had warned the media to stop 'Taliban-style' reporting of femicide incidences occurring during the COVID-19 period. The lockdown and remote working policies unleashed a craze of gender-based violence reported across the country. The Media Observer notes the media failed to remain balanced, dispassionate, and objective in its coverage of.

Murder is murder, and it should be reported as such – but we want to play relationship experts and romance writers by justifying this heinous crime and playing Shakespearean tactics by adding romance to what ought to be reported in two words: murder; crime.¹

It observes that:

Three years later, the role of media cannot be underestimated or disregarded. However, it calls for scrutiny by the media regulator and media stakeholders, to help it (media) get back in line and focus on proper ethical-oriented reporting of femicide.

This analysis acts as a guide for intervention, calling out media actors who went out of line and supporting the media in bettering their position in covering femicide.

David Omwoyo Omwoyo, MBS

CEO & Secretary to the Council.

¹ <https://mediaobserver.co.ke/index.php/2021/09/13/on-femicide-we-have-taliban-style-reporting-in-our-news-desks/>

In the month of January 2024, there was a public outcry against a wave of femicide- targeted killing of women because of their gender, which is an important global indicator of gender inequality and violence (Walby, 2022).

The incidences, such as the horrific killing of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni, pointed at lack of regard for human life, particularly the lives of women. This prompted discussions as to why this trend is developing and what can be done to mitigate such occurrences.

Femicide ought not to happen in any democratic and progressive society. However, in a highly patriarchal society that discriminates against women and girls in stereotypes, gender roles, unequal power relations between men and women, and harmful social norms, it was only a matter of time before gender-related killings manifest.

With 20,000 deaths, Africa saw the highest number of killings involving intimate partners and family members in 2022, this according to UN Women (2023) statistics. Like many other African countries, Kenya has a highly patriarchal society. “This has a direct correlation to the challenges encountered in enactment and implementation of legislation in regard to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Kenya” (Kitonga, n.d.).

Over the past months OdipoDev.com in conjunction with African Uncensored meticulously examined news reports from reputable Kenyan sources and compiled over 500 cases of femicide between January 2016 and December 2023. The cases are not isolated; instead, they reveal recurring patterns, indicating a deeper and more systemic issue.

From the data collected it was indicative that 2018 recorded the highest number of femicide cases reported. Data from Odipodev.com indicated significant patterns in intimate partner and stranger killings. Stabbing and hacking emerged as the predominant methods in intimate partner murders, while strangulation also stands out as the primary cause of death in stranger killings—often following incidents of sexual violence. Disturbingly extreme methods such as hacking, beheading, and burnings have also been documented. Notably, the use of firearms was most prevalent when perpetrators were affiliated with law enforcement.

The cases present the need to explore media coverage to ascertain adherence to the code of conduct for the practice of journalism as well as identify gaps in media coverage of femicide.

The report reviews the number of cases and the style of reporting for the period between January 1-24, 2024, and generally explores the legal, ethical and context of the reporting.

The term, also used interchangeably with femicide, was coined several decades ago to define the gender-related motivation associated with the killing of women and girls. Further, the term according to UNODC (2019) has no commonly agreed definition but what is observable, is a plurality of definitions stemming from different legal and sociological approaches, which indicate the elements that may contribute to labelling a crime as “femicide”. On the historical use of the term, it can be traced back to 1970’s when it was coined to raise awareness of the violent deaths of women referring to the killing of females by males merely because they are females. It was not until 1976, that the term was reintroduced publicly in the modern age by women feminist pioneer, expert and activist, the late Professor Diana E.H. Russell, at the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women to bring attention to male violence and discrimination against women (CFOJA, 2024).

UNWomen (2023) define femicide as intentional killing with a gender-related motivation driven by gender roles, discrimination towards women and girls, unequal power relations between women and men or harmful social norms. It is a global problem, and cases are increasing, mainly taking place within and out of family spheres, putting women and girls at more risk. “Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world, as it represents a threat to millions of girls and women” (UNESCO, 2021). Additionally, UNODC (2019) recognizes that where data are available, it is clear that intimate partner/family-related homicide covers most of the killings categorized as femicide alongside other forms such as honour and [bride price]-related killings (WHO, 2012).

Research on the subject matter exists, indicating that about 66,000 women are killed in a year globally. UNODC (2019) and UN Women’s survey reveals that 81,100 women and girls were killed in 2021 and around 45,000 women and girl’s world-wide were killed by their intimate partners and family members.

With an estimated 20,000 femicide cases in 2022, Africa saw the highest absolute number of killings involving intimate partners and family members, according to (UNWOMEN, 2023) statistics. A repetition.

To better understand the phenomenon, scholars have dedicated time developing scholarly articles, journals, and academic research on theories of femicide, types of femicide, impact of femicide and fight to end intimate partner femicide. Baker, et al. (2015) trace roots of femicide through an Infographic illustration of a tree from branches to roots.

The downward approach by Baker, shows how femicide is conducted through targeted murder of girls and women sometimes as an honour killing, sexual violence, human trafficking attributed to factors like gender inequality, sexism, discrimination in institutions and differences in power. Consequently, Wangui (2021) in a research project on News media framing of femicide, An analysis of Kenyan newspapers’ reports on the killing of two women published in 2021 emphasised on sexual differences and financial desires as causes for gender-based killing by intimate partners.

i. Contextual disposition in Kenya

Femicide goes against the values that the 2010 Kenyan Constitution upholds.

According to Femicide Count Kenya, 150 femicides cases were recorded in 2023. This number only represents cases reported in the media; the true count is probably much higher. (Kitonga, n.d.) also cites lack of disaggregated data on homicide or femicide as a key challenge. Additionally, statistics from relief online indicated that, in just the first month of 2024, at least 10 women had lost their lives, exacerbating an already alarming trend. Femicide Count Kenya data indicates that 504 women were killed between 2019 and 2024 (Reliefweb, 2024). These reports underscore the grave circumstances throughout the nation in spite of the constitutional assurances of parity and accomplishment - a fundamental duty of the state and all its organs.

The data by Africa Uncensored also indicated that Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru Counties reported the highest incidences of femicide-related killings. However, it's crucial to note that due to data limitations and uneven news coverage across the country, this doesn't necessarily indicate that they have the highest overall murder rates. Some counties either underreport femicide cases or omit crucial details. Additionally, certain areas lack news correspondents or media bureaus, resulting in limited local coverage that may not reach the national level. This underscores the complexity of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of femicide trends nationwide.

Nevertheless, despite the deficiencies, Kenya stands well above its neighbours on femicide on the World Bank Group's Women, Business and the Law Index scoring 80.6 out of 100 compared to the regional average of 72.6 observed across Sub-Saharan Africa, and higher than the average score for Eastern and Southern Africa, at 74.1 (Worldbank, 2023).

ii. Coverage of similar femicide cases in the past

Some of the femicide reports shared by the media include, but not limited to:

- **Case a - In 2018**, media reported the mysterious disappearance and brutal murder of Rongo university student Sharon Otieno. The case is still ongoing.
- **Case b - In 2020**, media reported on the death of Keroche heiress Tecra Muigai who died while receiving treatment. There were notable links to femicide by the media due to the fact that she was living with her boyfriend Omar Lali.
- **Case c - Another shocking case was in 2019**, when Ivy Wangechi a medical student in Moi University medical student was hacked to death by her boyfriend in broad daylight.
- **Case d - Monicah Kimani:** Found murdered in 2018. His killer has already been convicted for the killing and sentenced to hang.

The media sustained coverage of the above named cases as a public interest matter. Although some of these cases are yet to be determined and the media continues with the coverage.

Media coverage of femicide in January 2024 made the vice a subject of public discourse. The media was at the forefront of unearthing cases of such nature, steering a national debate on the need for respect of human rights and the Constitution of Kenya, and more specifically, articles that safeguard rights and freedoms of women and protect them from violence.

Despite this, questions still linger on how professionally or not the media covered femicide stories, including accuracy, sensitivity, privacy infringement as well as intrusion to grief—all of which are key pillars in the Code of Conduct for Kenya Journalists.

a. Constitution of Kenya

The Constitution recognises several important general principles that are of importance to gender equality and that have a general bearing on gender-based violence in the Country (Kitonga, n.d.). Chapter 4 of the Bill of rights outlines the rights of women and respective limitations contemplated in the Constitution as discussed in brief inter alia.

- Chapter 4, article 19 (3) of the Bill of rights recognises that the rights and fundamental freedoms in the chapter belong to each individual and are not granted by the State, do not exclude other rights and fundamental freedoms not in the Bill of Rights, and are subject only to the limitations contemplated in the Constitution.
- Chapter 4, article 21 (3) of the Bill of rights establishes that it is a fundamental duty of the State and every State organ to observe, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the rights and fundamental freedoms in the Bill of Rights. Therefore, state's failure to guarantee rights of women is a violation of the constitution.
- Chapter 4, article 27 of the Bill of rights guarantees that every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law, equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms, women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres. To give full effect to the realisation of the rights guaranteed under the Article, the State shall take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination.
- Chapter 4 part 5 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission mandated to promote respect for human rights and develop a culture of human rights in the Republic and to promote gender equality and equity generally and to coordinate and facilitate gender mainstreaming in national development.

Other articles safeguarding rights and freedoms of women and protect them from violence include (Reliefweb, 2024);

- Article 10 (2) (b) sets out the national values and principles of governance to include, among others, human dignity equity social justice, inclusivity, equality, human rights, non-discrimination, and the protection of the marginalized (Kitonga, n.d.).
- Articles 25(a), 29(d) and (f) and 50 prohibit any form of torture or treatment that is cruel, inhuman, and degrading from either public or private entities. This means that the Constitution safeguards women's rights against sexual violence (Kitonga, n.d.).
- Article 28 guarantees the right to dignity and personal security.
- Article 43 emphasizes the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

b. Acts of Parliament

Kenya has enacted various vibrant legislations curbing the mischief of Gender Based Violence with the Sexual Offences Act being the key legislation that provides a national framework in the criminalisation and deterrence of Sexual Gender Based Violence in Kenya (Kitonga, n.d.).

- **Children’s Act No. 29 of 2022:** The Children’s Act makes provisions that safeguard the rights and welfare of children. Section 13 guarantees children (both girls and boys) the right to protection from physical and psychological abuse, neglect and any other form of exploitation including sale, trafficking, or abduction (Kitonga, n.d.).
- **Sexual Offences Act 2006:** The Act is a comprehensive law that criminalises a wide range of behaviours including rape, sexual assault, defilement, compelled or induced indecent acts with children, imbeciles or adults, gang rape, child pornography, child trafficking, child sex tourism, child prostitution, exploitation of prostitution, incest by male and female persons, sexual harassment, deliberate transmission of HIV or other life threatening sexually transmitted disease, stupefying with sexual intent, forced sexual acts for cultural or religious reasons among others. It is the first law in Kenya to recognise sexual harassment as a crime (Kitonga, n.d.).
- **Prohibition of female genital mutilation (FGM) Act 2011:** The prohibition of FGM Act 2011 seeks to prevent any girl circumcision as a harmful cultural practice (Kitonga, n.d.).
- **Media Council Act Of 2013:** Other than demanding for accuracy, fairness, integrity and accountability, the code of conduct is quite specific and sensitive on matters involved gender-based violence and reportage of cases involving goriness. The code guides journalists and members of the media on how to cover related issues – omissions and commissions.\

Article 9, guides on obscenity, taste, and tone in reporting. It bars journalists from publishing obscene or vulgar material unless it is of news value. Where such is published, sensitivity shall be applied on gory images and bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes, except for when if published, it will serve public interest. Further, a caveat is issued such that – an alert shall be issued to war viewers or readers of the information being published.

The code also guides on issues related to grief and shock warning journalists of sensitive intrusion. Another section of the code protects victims of sexual assault from identification and exposure (sec 19). Sections 20 and 22 cover use of pictures and names, and acts of violence respectively. On pictures, those of grief, disaster and those that embarrass and promote sexism shall be discouraged, while sec 22 warns media from presenting acts of violence, armed robberies, banditry, and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct.

c. Penal code

The Penal Code prohibits all acts of violence in its provisions. It however does not sufficiently address SGBV which is prevalent within the Kenyan society (Kitonga, n.d.).

d. International conventions

According to reliefweb (2024), Kenya is also party to international human rights treaties requiring the government to take effective measures to prevent, investigate, and address gender-based violence. (Kitonga, n.d.) states that Article 2(5) and (6) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, provides that the general principles of international law shall form part of the laws of Kenya, meaning that any treaty or convention that Kenya ratifies shall automatically form part of the national laws.

Such treaties include:

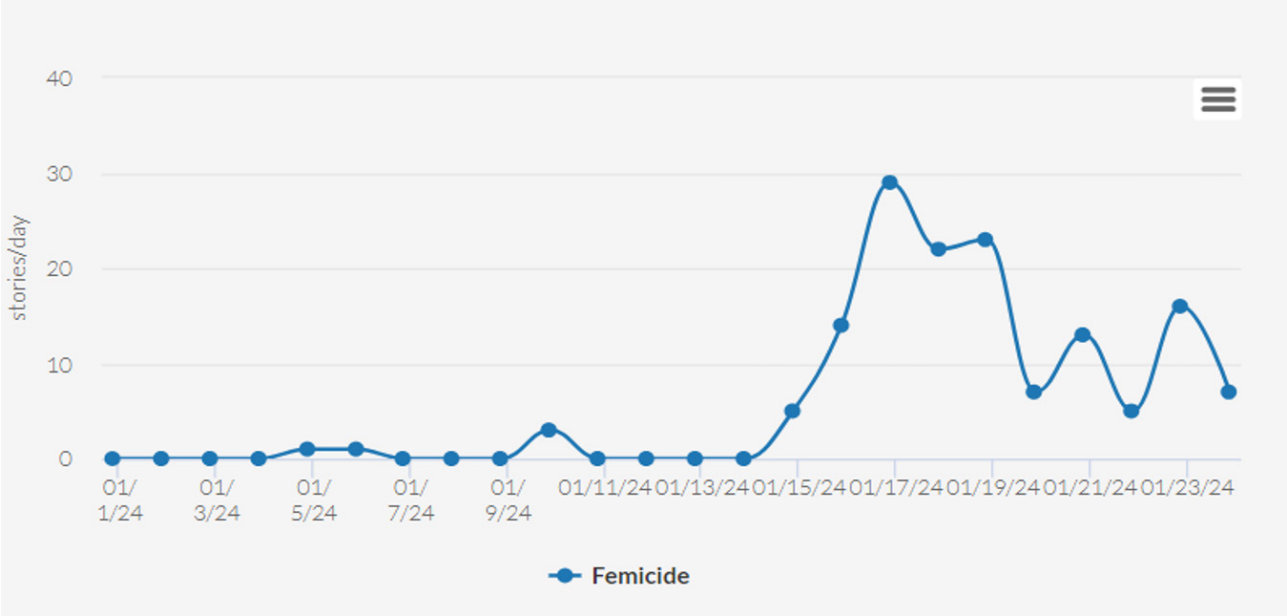
- ***The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979.*** According to Kitonga (n.d.), CEDAW bestows responsibility on state parties for acts and omissions by its organs and agents that constitute gender-based violence against women.
- ***The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention against Torture.*** Article 4 (1) of the covenant state that each State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law. The same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture. Further, each State Party shall make these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which consider their grave nature (UN, 1984).
- ***The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993):*** Article 4 (c) of the Declaration obligates states to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons (Kitonga, n.d.).
- ***Niamey Guidelines by the African Union:*** These guidelines provide guidance for African Union member states in effectively implementing their commitments and obligations to combat sexual violence and its consequences (AU, The Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence and its Consequences in Africa, 2017).
- ***The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003 (Maputo Protocol).*** The protocol obliges States Parties shall commit themselves to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men through public education, information, education and communication strategies, with a view to achieving the elimination of harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men (AU, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003).
- ***The Convention Against Torture (CAT) of 1984:*** Under CAT, Kenya has an obligation to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial, or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction (Kitonga, n.d.).
- ***Rome Statute of 1998:*** Article 7 lists rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity under crimes against humanity (ICC, 2011).

Despite these domestic and international legal and ethical obligations, there has been a noticeable gap in the government's response to the escalation of femicide cases. The lack of comprehensive and preventive measures, quick investigations, and swift legal actions against perpetrators has raised concerns about the state's commitment to protecting women from violence (Reliefweb, 2024).

The media on the other hand has demonstrated an important role in unearthing the horrendous acts and creating an atmosphere for the public to reflect, condemn and demand for action and change, thus becoming a key ally in the fight against Gender Based Violence. However, the efforts by the media are inadequate without the good will of relevant government agencies.

IV MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

According to the analysis of print and online newspapers, the incidences on women killed spiked at the beginning of the year. From the analysis it is indicative that the mention of the word femicide reached its peak on January 17, 2024. More than 146 reports related to femicide were carried by the print media and other news sites.



On January 3, 2024, print media houses broke the story on the death of socialite, Scarlet Wahu who was brutally murdered in an Airbnb in South B Nairobi. Key words picked during the reporting period, January 1-24, 2024 were as follows:

Top Words

femicide kenya violence kenyan perpetrators nigerian victims surge fida condemns waeni rita media killings declare wahu starlet raila ongoing odinga nairobi crime alarming women's murders kewopa gender-based federation gender criminal commission united ruto owino leader inspector airbnbs advisor addressing william strengthen parliamentary outrage normalized incidents gbv waded protests noting non-intimate nigeria nationwide ipv intentional families ensure directorate commit chiggai calling blaming underscore termed suspects shocked sankaire protecting presidential presenter passaris parliamentarians parliament online normalise norm nations moi kioni homicide gideon fida-kenya feminist dehumanization crisis chairperson babu azimio worrying witnessed violent victim-blaming vaw urging unreported unapologetic umoja-one trm tragically titled targeted

a. Broadcast Content analysis (TV and Radio,)

In broadcast media, various incidents of femicide in the period under review (January 1-24) were covered. The Cases of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni both of which occurred in short-stay rental apartments (Airbnb) in Nairobi received a comparatively wider coverage on both radio and TV as compared to the cases of Christine Ouma (in Homabay), Bridgit Ochieng (in Kisumu) and Rebecca Muthoni (in Laikipia), Grace Wangari (in Kasarani) and Lucy Wambui Jenkinns (in Laikipia).

i. Agenda setting

The coverage of Rita Waeni and Scarlet Wahu killings was initially reported as ‘gruesome murders’ by various media houses including vernacular radio outlets like Emoo and Namlolwe FM. This sensational and insensitive reporting elicited public interest and debate on social media drawing responses from activists, celebrities, and political leaders. Leaders, led by Women parliamentarians urged the government to declare femicide a national disaster.

From media monitoring reports, broadcast media condemned the acts of violence against women as stipulated in the code of conduct of journalism by offering a platform for individuals, groups, and institutions to amplify their voices against these acts. For instance, on January 19, in KTN News, women groups, and activists condemned the rise in the number of brutal killings of women and girls while Kenya Union of Post-Primary Education Teachers Executive Kisumu branch Zablon Awange (on Radio Namlolwe) condemned the killing and called for justice. Bishop Jackson Ole Sapit, the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya also condemned the inhumane and ungodly killing of women calling for the arrest of the perpetrators as captured on Classic 105, January 22, and Kass TV, January 19.

Subsequently, coverage by broadcast media began to frame the incidents as femicide as evidenced by interview captions on January 19, Citizen TV “Ending femicide” and on January 22, NTV “Alarming rate of femicide”. Previously, this was not the case. On January 19, Sam Gituku (Citizen TV) hosted Anne Ileri - Executive Director, Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA Kenya) on the topic, Ending Femicide. On January 22, Smriti Vidyarthi hosted a discussion on femicide on NTV Tonight featuring Dr. Susan Gitau, a psychologist, and Patricia Andago, a Research, and Data analyst.

The media also served as a platform for creating awareness on what was happening across the country, subsequently offering a stage for discussions to take place, evaluating the cause-effect relationship of the topic.

Panel discussions were notable across KBC, Classic 105, Anguo FM, Citizen TV and NTV Kenya from a range of experts for example from the National Gender & Equality Commission (NGEC), FIDA, psychologists and researchers. Ethical concerns were however raised as discussed further her below, where presenters discussed the topic without experts’ opinions ending with victim-shaming discussions.

ii. Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya - adherence

The lack of sensitivity and victim-blaming was noted in the media coverage of the issue where victims were blamed for their predicament. For instance, in a discussion held at Anguo FM on January 19, presenters directly sought callers’ views on whether social media influence had contributed to young ladies letting their guard down hence being exposed to femicide from men pretending to care for them. The discussion insinuated that the victims died because of their greed. After the arrest of Nigerian suspects following the killing of Waeni, Kiss FM presenter Sheila Kwamboka alias

Kwambox also made insensitive remarks on her show, Afrobeat tune on January 17, “Even if you guys are not feeling Nigerians this week, I don’t care.” The remarks showed total disregard for the grieving family who were news subjects at the time. In response to public concerns, Kiss FM demonstrated integrity and accountability by pulling down the video clip which demonstrated awareness of the responsibility of being duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically. This demonstrated the inherent call for maintaining integrity and common decency while respecting the dignity and intelligence of the audience and subject of the news.

On January 14, 2024, KTN News fell short of Accuracy and fairness in reporting as they reported “A 24-year-old woman murdered in an Airbnb house in Roysambu, and her body was found in a dustbin”. The news report stated that Rita was 24 years old without giving sources of the data. The report lacked proper news sourcing for the age of the deceased, as Rita Waeni was believed to be in her 20s according to detectives at the scene of the crime. The news item was therefore misleading the audience.

Also, insensitive headlines across Taifa Leo as reported on January 18 and 26, 2024, Mbona walienda na kichwa chake? & upasuaji wabaini alinyongwa na kukatwakatwa, revealed lack of professionalism across the print media. Obligated to adhere to clause 15 of the code of conduct on intrusion into grief of shock, they ought to have made inquiries with sensitivity, providing headlines less catchy and considerate of the family and relative grief.

iii. Capturing the voices of human rights & activist groups, civil society organizations, psychologists, and the clergy on femicide.

In response to the rise in the cases of femicide various groups were accorded coverage by the broadcast media in particular the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (Radio Jambo, Radio Citizen, Milele FM, Egesa FM, Classic 105, KTN Home, Citizen TV, KBC, KTN News January 16), the Zamara Foundation, Usikimye (Radio Citizen, January 18), National Gender and Equality Commission (Classic 105, January 22) where they condemned the rising cases of femicide in the country. The extent of coverage focused on highlighting their condemnation of the acts of violence against women and a clarion call to action. Through this coverage, there was increased awareness of the matter.

Noteworthy, interviews convened by the media (NTV January 22; Citizen TV, January 19) allowed space for the engagement of experts including on signs of abuse, addressing the root causes and the critical need for support systems. While this was commendable, the engagement was short-lived hence failing to trigger long-term debate to address the underlying root causes and response measures to femicide as an aspect of gender-based violence discourse.

The Media’s role in covering voices of the Church in Kenya on femicide further helped raise awareness, amplifying voices, challenging norms, advocating for reform, and facilitating dialogue. Religious institutions’ response to cases of femicide was noted in the reportage where Bishop Jackson Ole Sapit the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya, condemning the inhumane and ungodly killing of women calling for the arrest of the perpetrators. In the monitored stations, this was only noted on Kass TV (January 19) and Classic 105 (January 22).

The media must also be commended for its sustained coverage of femicide incidents specially in the cases of Scarlet Wahu and Rita Waeni which occurred in short-term rental stays termed as “Airbnb”. Their deaths exposed gaps in the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife and the Ministry of Interior and National Administration and provided the two ministries with an avenue to address security concerns related to femicide incidents in the short-term rental stays. Both ministries took proactive measures: new registration, licensing, and grading of sustainable tourism activities, including services provided by cottages and private residences engaged in guest house services in a bid to enhance safety

regulations, enforcement mechanisms, and public awareness initiatives to prevent similar tragedies in the future and ensure the protection of all individuals in society.

The Airbnb Company also distanced itself from the two murder incidents, responding to concerns voiced by Kenyans on social media. The company clarified that the two stays in question were not booked through their platform, with the media abiding by clause of the code of the conduct on fairness, as it provided comments from other parties mentioned in the cases (Look Up TV, TV47, NTV, K24, Citizen TV, January 16, Milele January 18).

iv. Creating awareness

- On January 15, the family of a woman who was found murdered at Airbnb in Roysambu in Kasarani managed to identify the body at the Nairobi city mortuary where the body was preserved. KTN Home, TV47, K24, Citizen TV, KBC, and KTN News reported that investigations were underway as police held two suspects to assist with the investigations.
- On January 16, Police in Tigithi location, Laikipia County were investigating the death of a 49-year-old woman allegedly killed by her younger brother after being hit on the head with a hammer over the Ksh 2,000 government cash transfer elderly upkeep stipend (KBC TV).
- January 18, Radio Lake Victoria reported that a 25-year-old woman, Christine Auma, was found murdered in her home in Boya village, Ndhiwa, Homa Bay County.
- Police initiated an investigation into the murder of Bridget Ochieng, a teacher at Obwolo Mixed Secondary School alleged to have been killed by her husband. Kenya Union of Post-Primary Education Teachers Executive Kisumu branch Zablun Awange condemned the killing and called for justice. This was captured on Radio Namlolwe, January 23.
- On January 17, Rita Waeni, a 20-year-old JKUAT student, was identified as the victim in the Roysambu murder. Her family revealed they received a ransom demand of Sh500,000 from her phone and reported the matter to the police, initiating investigations. Unfortunately, the demands were made after Rita had already been murdered. Rita and her killer had met on Instagram. (NTV, KTN Home, TV47, KTN News).

v. Institutions/organisations coverage

The following institutions that spoke against femicide received media coverage.

- The Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA) expressed concern that more cases of femicide might be going unreported. FIDA Vice-Chairperson Christine Kungu said it was unfortunate as other victims shied off and sometimes felt ashamed. This was captured on KTN Home, KTN News, Citizen TV, Radio Jambo, Radio Citizen, Milele FM, and Egesa on January 16.
- Kenyan feminists and the Zamara Foundation, Usikimye, a non-profit organization committed to ending sexual and gender-based violence formed a unified front against the startling increase in femicide in Kenya. The NGOs released a call to action, asking Kenyan women, supporters, civil society organizations, and government officials to join a non-violent march on January 27, 2024, starting at 10:00 a.m. at Jevanjee Gardens. (Radio Citizen, January 18).
- Radio Waumini covered the Kenya Women Parliamentarians urging the government to declare femicide a national disaster. (January 18)
- KBC TV covered the National Gender and Equality Commission condemning what it called “increasing cases of Femicide and Gender Based Violence in the Kenya. Commission Chairperson Joyce Mutinda emphasized the need to recognize the need to recognize signs of violence before

the situations worsens. She also identified the root causes of GBV such as toxic relationships, encounters with strangers in confined places and inadequate parenting. (Classic 105, January 22)

- Radio Namlolwe, January 23 highlighted the killing of Bridget Ochieng, a teacher at Obwolo Mixed Secondary School alleged to have been killed by her husband.).Police initiated an investigation into the murder.
- Following extensive coverage media of femicide, American-based company 'Airbnb' denied running the building where one case was reported. Later, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife issued a statement on cases femicide cases in the short-stay accommodation sector. The Tourism Regulatory Authority reaffirmed it's commitment to licensing, and grading sustainable tourism activities, including services provided by cottages and private residences engaged in guest house services (Look up TV, TV47, NTV, K24, Citizen TV, January 16, Milele FM, January 18).

vi. Panel Interviews

The Media Council monitoring and observation also uncovered the following coverage.

- **On January 19, Anguo FM presenters Mercy Mwazo and Javan Mwadime** discussed policies surrounding the Airbnb business, particularly the security measures and regulations involved following the recent murders witnessed at Airbnb apartments in Nairobi. The presenters sought callers' views on whether the social media influence had contributed to young ladies letting their guard down hence being exposed to such torture from men pretending to care for them. This approach was deemed as unethical as discussed somewhere else in this report.
- **On January 19, Sam Gituku (Citizen TV) hosted Anne Ileri** - Executive Director, Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA Kenya) on ending femicide. Anne noted the rising trend of women being murdered in Kenya whereby, she said the worrying statistics coming out of cases reported whereby she mentioned of an average of 50 cases that were reported in a year of specific femicide. She further claimed that most perpetrators are close persons to victims as victim shaming is high on social media platforms which brings the stigma to report and get help. Notably, Anne stated that there was a need to converse and look at the situation and the complexity as a national security matter. She shared the FIDA Toll-free number and advised Kenyans to visit FIDA offices across the country to seek help. Remarkably, Anne appreciated the media coming out to condemn victim shaming.
- **On January 22, Smriti Vidyarthi** hosted a discussion on femicide on NTV Tonight featuring Dr Susan Gitau, a psychologist, and Patricia Andago, a Research, and Data analyst at Odipo Dev. The discussion highlighted the alarming rate of femicide, with reportedly over 500 women killed between January 2016 and December 2023. The guests emphasized the existence of signs of abuse before these tragic incidents occurred and the importance of addressing the root causes. They discussed challenges in seeking justice, including the extended duration of up to 5 years to close some cases and the underreporting of issues. The conversation also addressed the critical need for support systems and avenues where victims could turn for help.

vii. Follow-ups

From monitoring, there were cases of follow ups across the media, providing updates to the developing stories majorly on the Rita Waeni, Grace Wangare and Lucy Wambui cases. This follow ups were majorly comprised of police and autopsy reports. Such is essential in keeping the audiences updated on the death causes and to what extent have the authorities gone to investigate the cases; the faster they unearth these details, the faster the perpetrators can be brought to justice and

institute measures to prevent more deaths. The follow up coverage was prolific across the following stations: KTN Home, Citizen TV, K24 TV, NTV, KTN News, TV47, KBC, Look UP TV, Milele FM, and the Star newspaper.

- Three suspects were arrested by police in connection with the gruesome murder. One of the suspects was arrested at JKIA and was believed to be of Nigerian origin after the CCTV footage revealed that the main suspect behind the killing. The details of the suspects and the girl who had been murdered were not released to the public by January 16 (KTN Home, K24).
- Suspects linked to the murder of Rita Waeni were arraigned in court where a knife was presented to the court by investigating officers. The two Nigerian suspects according to police records were Willie Ovie Opia and Johnbull Asibor. The suspects were presented before a magistrate court in Makadara. (Kamba TV, January 23).
- **On January 19**, Chief Government Pathologist Dr. Johansen Oduor addressed journalists in Nairobi after conducting a post-mortem on Rita Waeni's body. He expressed shock at the way Rita met her death. Oduor said despite having extensive experience in the field of forensics pathology spanning over a decade, he had never come across a case like that of Waeni. Oduor further revealed that Waeni's killer tried to extract her fingernails in a bid to eliminate traces of his DNA from the victim's body and noted that he was able to collect samples from some of Waeni's fingernails that were not damaged by her killer and were sent for further forensics analysis. (Citizen TV, K24 TV).
- **On January 22**, the head and pieces of clothes found in Kiambaa dam were confirmed by family to be that of Rita Waeni, the 20-year-old woman whose decapitated body was discovered at a house in Roysambu. According to media reports the two Nigerian nationals suspected of the murder were found to be living in Kenya illegally. The- two were traced to an apartment in Ndenderu, Kiambu County, where they were apprehended. The court granted orders to detain the suspects until January 31, 2024, as investigations continue. Items recovered from their residence include a hatchet, a butcher's knife, a Kenyan national identity card belonging to Omar Juma, six cell phones, three laptops, and 10 SIM cards. However, DNA samples had been picked for further analysis as the hunt for the main suspect took up pace. (NTV, KTN News, January 21, TV47, KBC, January 22; Citizen TV, K24 January 23).
- **On January 23**, Detectives from the homicide department took over the University Student murder case investigations after a planned autopsy on the recovered head believed to be the deceased Rita Waeni was postponed. The state was also set to charge John Matara the main suspect in the murder of Starlet Wahu this week after completing the investigation into her murder and the file was handed over to the Director of Public Prosecutions for approval. The latest cases have since turned into worrying cases of femicide in the country as the process of seeking justice for murdered women is labelled slow. (Citizen TV).
- **On January 16**, Police Tigithi location, Laikipia County investigating the death of a 49-year-old woman allegedly killed by her younger brother after being hit on the head with a hammer over a Ksh 2,000 Government cash transfer elderly upkeep stipend (KBC TV, NTV).
- **On January 24**, an autopsy report of the slain Grace Wangare revealed that she died of excessive bleeding following an alleged attack by her boyfriend in the Kasarani area in Nairobi. The postmortem on the body was conducted on January 24 by government pathologist Peter Ndegwa at the City Mortuary. Clinton Mwangi the suspect in the death of 23-year-old Grace was held by the police to pave way for investigations. Grace was brutally attacked and stabbed leading to excessive bleeding that caused her death. Her body was recovered along Mirema

Road in Kasarani with a stab wound. Grace is the 8th woman to be killed under mysterious circumstances in the last 2 weeks (KTN Home, TV47).

- **On January 22**, six suspects were arrested in connection to Sunday's shooting of Laikipia rancher Lucy Wambui Jennings. Laikipia West Sub-County Police Commander Benjamin Muhia who confirmed the incident said that Police were trailing more suspects and seeking to nab the weapon used in the shooting incident (Citizen TV).
- **On January 17**, Rita Waeni, a 20-year-old JKUAT student, was identified as the victim in the Roysambu murder. Her family revealed they received a ransom demand of Sh500,000 from her phone and reported the matter to the police, initiating investigations. Unfortunately, the demands were made after Rita had already been murdered. According to the family, Rita and her killer had met on Instagram. (NTV, KTN Home, TV47, KTN News).
- The Star published this story on January 20, 2024, after government pathologist had conducted an autopsy on parts of Waeni's body that had been found in a dustbin. The Star explicitly detailed disturbing details of the brutal murder. Find more details under the print section herein.

b. Print media headlines

Across Taifa Leo, both the frontpage and page two headlines were found to be sensational and insensitive to family, friends, and readers.

A Nation Media Group Publication

TAIFA LEO
Lugha yangu, gazeti langu

Alhamisi, Januari 18, 2024 KSh30 | TSh500 | RFR300 taifaleo.nation.co.ke | No. 21931

Mwangaza azidisha pesa za maskini
Gavana huyo sasa aongeza bajeti ya kuwanunulia wakazi maskini ng'ombe uk 4

Uchunguzi kuhusu Matara sasa wakamilika
Ndiye mshukiwa mkuu katika mauaji ya dadake Pasta Kanyari uk2

Maswali yaihuba kuhusu kiini cha mauaji ya mwanachuo Rita Waeni, 20 aliyekata vipande ndani ya chumba Jijini

MBONA WALIENDA NA KICHWA CHAKE?



UNYAMA: Siku 4 baada kuuawa, kichwa cha Waeni hakijapatikana licha ya vipande vya mwili wake kupatikana

Mbona walienda na kichwa chake? (January 18, 2024)

2 | TAIFA LEO | ALHAMISI, JANUARI 18, 2024

||| HABARI ZA KITAIFA |||

KITENDAWILI | Washukiwa 3 wa mauaji ya mwanachuo huyo wakamatwa kuhustana na unyama huo

Maafisa wasaka kichwa cha Waeni

Sababu ya wauaji kutoroka na kichwa baada ya kukatakata vipande vipande haljabalnika; familia yasema alikuwa msichana mwerevu

BENSON MATHEKA NA PIUS MAUNDU

MAAFISA wa polisi wanao-lingaza manaji ya msichana mwenye umri wa miaka 20 katika chumba cha kukodisha...



Lango la makazi ya Steven Mutesi kijijini Mukimwanal, Makeni. Hapa ndipo nyumbani kwa Rita Waeni, msichana aliyouawa katika chumba cha AirBnB, Roysambu. Picha:Pius Maundu

Maafisa wasaka kichwa cha Waeni (Benson Matheka na Pius Maundu).

KORTI | Wanaume wawili rala wa Nigeria wanazuliwa kuhusiana na mauaji

Upasuaji wabaini alinyongwa na kukatwakatwa

Kichwa chake marehemu ambacho kimekuwa kikitatikana kilipatikana Juzi

NA MARY WAMBUI

MBERANI kweza Rita Waeni alinyongwa kichwa akakatwakatwa kichwa y vipande vya mwili wake kutapwa.

Machoro hayo yamefichaiwa na mpasuaji mwanu wa serikali, Dkt Johannes Oduor.

Akizunguza jama haada ya kufarpo upasuaji kwenye kichwa kilichopatikana Kaunti ya Kiambu na kinachosimika kuwa cha marehemu (haada ya kutambuliwa hayo na familia yake), Dkt Oduor alieleza uchunguzi unaoandika kichwa cha marehemu kilikotwa kuuzia shingoni.

"Utoto ulikuwa na jeraha ambalo kwangu linaonekana kama kililwa kuhafwa na kifaa botu na haada ya kuchanguzwa vinyo vyo shingoni, jilisona mifupa iliyowarjika ambayo ni muhimu sana katika hesi ya maazi-

bechembe zake zingali zinahitajika kufanywa uchunguzi katika maabara ya serikali ili kubainiwapo zinalingana na schemu myinginezo za mwili.

"Kichwa kimeza na ni sharti kutamie mbinu za kisayansi kubainiwapo kweli ni cha mbarimwa. Kuna chembechembe ambazo zitafanywa uchunguzi wa DNA ili kujaribu kuzilinganisha na zilizotokwa kwenye mwili uliopatikana," alifafanua Dkt Oduor akiwa City Mortuary Nairobi.

Majeraha kwenye kichwa na mifupa iliyowarjika shingoni haenda yafichaiwa kwa kifaa botu.

Upasuaji huo ulifanyika City Mortuary haada ya upasuaji wa awali uliofanywa schemu myinginezo za mwili wake wili iliyopita.

Walioteleleza maazi ya Rita waliitupa kichwa chake haada na schemu myingine za mwili wake uliokotwa vipande vipande katika kile kinachosimika kuwa jaribu la kuficha uhaba.

Jumata jamaa wa marehemu walihitaji haada kichwa kilichopatikana ni chake haada ya kikatikana City Mortuary kuona viina vilivyopatikana nacho katika

Kituo cha Polisi cha Kiambu, Kaunti ya Kiambu.

Makachero wamewakamata rala wawili wa Nigeria, William Ovie Opatan Jibabali Akor wanaotambuliwa kuteleleza maazi hayo.

Mwili huo walikifichwa mbele ya Mahakama ya Makadara Jumata ambapo polisi waliomba kuwazaliwa kwa maada wa rala hizi ili kukatwa kwa uchunguzi.

"Rala hizi wa kigeni wamepatikana kuwepo ndani kinyume na sheria kwa sababu nambari ya pasipoti ya William Ovie Opatan, AOR(2286) imemaliza maada wa kutamika nye Jibabali Akor hana pasipoti na maada hii aliyopita mweka mmoja uliopita," alimwambia hizi ya kipo iliyowazaliwa kortini na Afisa wa Uchunguzi, Bw Benjamin Wangila.

Mwili huo watazaliwa kutamika haadatanu wili gizo wakati polisi wanaotambuliwa kuwazaliwa kwa uchunguzi.

Wapelelezi wanaochunguza maazi wamechukua ushikani na kutia mawegano kuhusu tambe ya upasuaji unaoandika kichwa cha marehemu kutika hilo ukungu wili ya pili Mwili wa Rita uliopatikana Jumata wili iliyopita.

- The first two paragraphs were explicit and revealed how Waeni's killer/s decapitated her body using a hacksaw and took off with her head. Such descriptions were unnecessary because they inflict more pain on the victim's loved ones. Taifa Leo breached clause 14 of the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism on intrusion into grief and shock. They published a developing story on the outcome of the autopsy conducted on the remains of Rita Waeni on January 26, 2024. The newspaper headline was insensitive, giving gory details of how she was murdered.
- The media monitoring team also picked The Star's, which published the story depicted below on January 20, 2024, after government pathologist had conducted an autopsy on parts of Waeni's body that had been found in a dustbin. This was explicit revealing disturbing details of the brutal murder.

SAMPLES TAKEN

Waeni killer clipped off her fingernails to hide evidence

Postmortem confirms hacksaw was used to dismember student's body

CYRUS OMBATI



The killer of university student Rita Waeni (pictured), whose body was found in a dustbin in Roysambu, clipped off her fingernails to hide evidence from detectives.

A postmortem conducted on Friday showed she had missing nails.

"The person who did all these also tried to clip off the fingernails for reasons which I might not be able to know, but for us to ascertain when we see fingernails clipped off, we think probably the person was trying to hide evidence as that we are unable to get DNA from the victims," government pathologist Johannes Oduor told reporters after the exercise.

The finding has led detectives puzzled, with the motive of the killing yet to be established.

"In investigations, nails help in gathering evidence. People fight when dying and DNA evidence can be hidden there," Oduor said.

He however said there were remnants of some fingernails and that samples were taken for further analysis to help police in their investigations.

The autopsy confirmed the body was dismembered with the head chopped off and the legs also cut off from the trunk.

"The skin looks like it was cut with a sharp object but the bone was swelled off with what looks like a hacksaw," Oduor said.

"This is the first time I'm seeing something like this in my forensic life. I have never come across such an incident." The pathologist also picked samples from the kidney,

stomach, vagina and blood for toxicological analysis at the Government Chemist for further tests to ascertain if there were substances introduced to the body.

This is after police suspected the woman could have been dragged before being murdered on January 13, at an apartment.

A team from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations joined the probe with a focus on the killer who is still at large.

The detectives believe contrary to reports, the killer could be Kenyan.

Preliminary findings show he had bought the mobile phone he used for communication with the owner of the apartment and also in fact, went to the scene and used a line registered in a woman's name.

Police are now focusing on the motive of the murder given the woman had just known her killer days earlier.

They are talking to the parents, fellow students at the university and her friends, as part of efforts to know why she was killed.

POLICE SUSPECTED THE WOMAN COULD HAVE BEEN DRAGGED BEFORE BEING MURDERED

The killer clipped off her fingernails to hide evidence (Cyrus Ombati).

The Star did not leave it there, a further story was captured with similar sentiments and attributes of sensationalism and insensitivity. These are depicted below.



Waeni was strangled, cut into pieces – autopsy (January 26-28, 2024).



Rita Waeni was strangled before being decapitated (Cyrus Ombati).

c. Digital Media (Trending)

- Across online space, the hashtags #Silencingwomen #TotalShutdownKE #EndFemicideKE trended for a while during the monitoring period with leaders, media organisations, civil society organisations and other stakeholders calling for justice. John Allan Namu of African Uncensored in a series of tweets on his X platform using the hashtag #Silencingwomen, noted that the sheer quantum of deaths that can be considered as femicide are truly worrisome.
- The use of social media to advance a social justice course has in the recent past been embraced by organizations and individuals. The hashtag highlighted the ongoing struggle for gender equality in the country and some of the aspects that came out were – Trolling of women on social media platforms and possible harassment, there was a sense of a deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes from the comments, which can lead to social pressure that discourage women from speaking out on sensitive topics or challenging the status quo. Another characteristic that was picked was the culture of silencing social media users through bullying and sometimes outright intimidation, particularly on themes related to domestic violence.



Media coverage of femicide was focused and consistent. The media remained at the forefront reporting on the cases informing and educating Kenyans, but at the same time annoying policy makers.

Largely, the media managed to provide accurate and balanced reporting on femicide, seeking comments of parties mentioned in the cases and with some level of sensitivity. The media also provided a platform for deliberations, led by experts in matters femicide, provided follow ups and basically set the agenda.

However, coupled by pressure, the urge to break news and the need to attract readership through beguiling headlines, some media outlets did not adhere to the media ethics and fell into the trap of sensational, inaccurate, and insensitive coverage. As a result, the Council, in a statement, reminded media outlets on the need to stick to professionalism and the code of conduct in reporting femicide.

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AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF FEMICIDE REPORTING IN KENYA

January 1st to January 31st 2024

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