

Kenya's Increase in Femicide

A Political Examination of Ruto's 42 Members Task Force to address Gender Based Violence

Eva-Maria Okot

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At a Glance

- › Kenya has recorded its highest number of femicide cases since 2017, with over 600 murders of women between 2016 and 2024, exposing deep systemic and structural gender inequalities.
- › President William Ruto's establishment of a 42-member task force on Gender-Based Violence marks the first formal state acknowledgment of femicide as a national crisis, yet critics label it a performative response lacking structural power and accountability.
- › The persistence of patriarchal governance, weak enforcement of gender laws, and political inertia have normalized violence against women as part of Kenya's broader culture of impunity.
- › Feminist movements and civil society groups, led by campaigns such as **#StopKilling-Women** and **Safe Homes-Safe Spaces**, have reframed femicide as a political issue demanding state accountability rather than private tragedy.
- › The failure to define femicide as a distinct legal category in Kenya's penal system undermines prosecution and justice delivery, reflecting institutionalized misogyny within law enforcement and the judiciary.
- › Kenya's handling of femicide illustrates the intersection of gender, governance, and legitimacy, revealing how state inaction on gendered violence erodes public trust and exposes the contradictions within Kenya's democratic promises.

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Introduction

Kenya has been confronted with an increase of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), particularly a record high number of femicide cases have been reported in the past 2 years, targeting specifically girls and young women. President William Ruto has avoided the topic publicly since stepping into office, until late 2024 when statistics released showed the highest number of murdered women recorded in Kenya since 2017¹. In response, Ruto announced the allocation of approximately 700 thousand Euro to address the alarmingly high numbers². On December 17th, 2024, the government approved the establishment of a 42-member task group with the purpose of developing a comprehensive approach to address femicide on various levels, most significantly the structural and political³. The team is led by former Chief Justice Nancy Baraza, known for her expertise and advocacy in democratic and women's rights, and is expected to report their findings and solutions within 90 days to the President. Essentially, the issue has ignited significant debate nation-wide within political circles, advocacy groups, civil society organizations as well as the academic realm. The government response was a result of heavy public outcry which took many people to protest peacefully on the streets of Nairobi almost a year prior. However, the actual policy implications are yet to be seen, especially since Kenya has seen an escalating rise in public demonstrations which have spread nation-wide and have resulted in little to no political changes within the current government.

An Overview of Femicide

Femicide is defined as the "gender-related killing of women and girls"⁴. Globally, UN statistics suggests that one in three women have experienced intentional physical or sexual violence directed towards them, with an escalation for about 51,000 to femicide and with over half committed by intimate partners, husbands or family members⁵. Particularly amongst countries within the global south, it is a measurable indicator of development under the Sustainable Development Goals, namely under Goal 5⁶, and thus making it a significant human rights issue. SDG 5 aims to end discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women and girls, ensuring equal rights and opportunities. Historically, during the 1980s and 1990s, gender-based violence began to be increasingly recognized as a serious problem at the international level, not only for women but also for the attainment of equality, prosperity, development and peace (United Nations, 1986a). Up to today, despite significant advancements in international legal frameworks, policies, and grassroots efforts, millions of women and girls continue to face various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, human trafficking, and harmful traditional practices.

Categorizing GBV into three distinct types, namely the structural, systemic and systematic, allows to identify GBV as not a single nor isolated occurrence, rather an emergence from different levels of power and oppression. Systematic describes the

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deliberate, organized, and executed use of sexual violence in a methodical way, e.g. as a weapon in conflicts. Systemic GBV highlights the ingrained widespread patterns upheld by institutions and policies within an entire system, while lastly, structural GBV originated from deeply embedded social, economic and political structures which are often invisible within society.

The root causes of GBV stem from various socio-cultural and historical factors, including the hierarchical power dynamics between men and women, the distinct ways boys and girls are socialized, and the political, economic, and legal disadvantages that women encounter globally⁷. Additionally, the normalization of violence as a means of resolving conflicts and the unequal perceptions and valuations of male and female bodies and sexuality further perpetuate this issue.

Increase of GBV in Kenya

Within Kenya, GBV has a complex history due to its normalization within certain cultural and tribal contexts; practices like intimate partner violence, honour killings, and dowry-related murders going unpunished.

As of today in 2025, the Africa Data Hub is the only reliable source, a collective of data organisations operating across three African countries that work together to provide local journalists with verified accurate up-to-date data, tools, training, mentoring and support on current femicide cases. Drawing from court records and media reports, the database analyses over 930 female murders, 628 of which meet the UNODC's definition of femicide, to uncover fresh insights into patterns of violence against women between 2016 and 2024⁸.

While significant data has previously only been available through surveys like the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) which started including indicators for gender-based violence in its reports around 2003⁹, revealing a high prevalence of such violence among Kenyan women, we can assume that it predated colonial time. However, there is data proofs that it existed in many African societies precolonial in more general terms. These societies often had gender roles that, while sometimes complementary, also placed women in subordinate positions, making them vulnerable to various forms of violence.

Additionally, oral histories, indigenous customs, and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms suggest that forms of GBV, such as domestic violence, forced marriages, and other harmful cultural practices (e.g., female genital mutilation), pre-existed long before colonial rule. Colonialism may have altered, reinforced, or reshaped certain dynamics, but it did not introduce GBV as a social phenomenon. Instead, it often exacerbated gender inequalities by formalizing patriarchal structures in legal and economic systems, further marginalizing women. Empirical and factual evidence suggests that colonialism significantly altered gender dynamics and hierarchies in Kenya, often diminishing women's power and agency in land ownership and political participation¹⁰. Indirect ruling by the British Colonial rule, a system where the British governed through local structures, was for example marked by formalized male leadership by appointing male chiefs and headmen, sidelining

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women from decision-making structures under the Native Authority Ordinance (1912)¹. Furthermore, indigenous systems that allowed women's participation in governance were erased or weakened. The British introduced private land ownership under the Crown Lands Ordinance (1902)², which excluded women from land ownership. In the Kikuyu land tenure reforms (1954-55), land previously controlled by lineages (which included women's access) was individualized to male heads of households. Taxation policies (Hut and Poll Tax, 1901)³ forced men into wage labour, while women were left to maintain households and farms without resources.

Since gaining independence, Kenya has been marked by gender inequality rooted in regional and social and cultural patriarchy, however, unlike colonial rule, during post-independence, it became politicized. Hence, gender inequality became deeply tied to political power, governance, policymaking, and struggles over who gets to control resources and rights. Political power remained concentrated among men, with gender equality framed as a political bargaining tool rather than a fundamental right. Women's representation in leadership was often symbolic rather than substantive, with women given minor roles to appease international pressure while real power remained in male-dominated networks.

The society largely operated under a discriminatory social structure reinforced by negative stereotypes about women. Kenyan courts upheld these societal norms by failing to safeguard women's human rights¹¹. As a result, women faced widespread discrimination, particularly in inheritance, land ownership, marriage, and the division of matrimonial property. This systemic exclusion left many women vulnerable to poverty¹². Most recent statistics according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics show that as of 2019, female exceeded male population slightly¹³. However, while there are more women attending primary and secondary education, more men continue in university or higher education, therefore, limiting women from accessing better jobs. The labour force participation is dominated by men as of 2019, especially in urban areas. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector, particularly in low-paid, unregulated, and insecure jobs such as petty trade, domestic work, and informal manufacturing¹⁴. This gendered segmentation reinforces economic vulnerability and limits access to social protections and formal employment benefits¹. Thus, the total poverty rate is higher by approx. 10 percent amongst women within the total population. Sectors like agriculture are dominated by men, women only contributing to agriculture less than 40 percent of the entire population.

¹ *Native Authority Ordinance*, No. 29 of 1912 (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya), in *Kenya Gazette*, 1912. This Ordinance marked the formal beginning of indirect rule in colonial Kenya, empowering selected African chiefs to enforce colonial policies under European oversight.

² *Crown Lands Ordinance*, No. 21 of 1902 (Colony and Protectorate of British East Africa), in *Kenya Gazette*, 1902. This Ordinance vested all "unoccupied" land in the British Crown, facilitating large-scale European settlement and dispossession of African communities from ancestral lands.

³ *Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance*, No. 10 of 1901 (British East Africa Protectorate), in *Kenya Gazette*, 1901. This ordinance imposed a tax on African households and later on adult males, compelling participation in the colonial cash economy and reinforcing economic dependency on colonial labor systems.

Persistent Gender Inequalities in Labour and Livelihoods

Despite marginal improvements in education access and population parity, structural barriers to women's full economic participation remain entrenched. Gendered poverty, unequal access to productive resources, and overconcentration in the informal economy continue to perpetuate economic insecurity among Kenyan women. These economic disadvantages are compounded by historical injustices rooted in colonial and postcolonial policy frameworks, making it clear that legal reforms alone are insufficient. Addressing women's economic empowerment requires not only formal inclusion but also a transformation of cultural norms, land tenure systems, and access to capital and technology.

Female Representation in Politics and Adjacent Sectors

Other fields, especially within active political participation were affected as well. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), over the past decade, Kenya has seen a significant increase in the number of female legislators, rising from none during the 60s to 22 percent in the National Assembly and 31 percent in the Senate after the 2022 elections. However, while women's rights advocates and policymakers have prioritized formal laws and systems, the informal structures that suppress women's voices have been largely overlooked. Although more women now participate in local and national policy discussions, they lack real influence in decision-making. As a result, progress on gender-related issues such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and reproductive health has stagnated.

Participation in selected decision-making positions in the public service as of 2021 highlight major gender disparities in executive roles. For example, as Cabinet Secretaries, Women held 14 out of the total positions in both 2020 and 2021, representing 33.3%, while men held 66.7% of the positions. Essentially, women remained significantly underrepresented in top leadership roles, such as Governors, County Commissioners, and Chiefs, highlighting ongoing gender disparities in political and administrative leadership. Additionally, gender representation in Kenya's Legislature and Judiciary for the years 2020 and 2021, highlights disparities in leadership and decision-making roles. Within legislature bodies, women remain underrepresented in both national and county legislatures. No female speakers were recorded at either level in 2020 or 2021. While women's share of MP positions increased slightly, overall representation remains below 25%. Within the Judiciary, Women have strong representation in the lower courts (Magistrates and High Court Judges). The

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Supreme Court and Kadhis' Courts⁴ remain male-dominated, and The Court of Appeal has nearly achieved gender parity, making it the most balanced judicial level.

While institutional reforms have made some progress toward increasing the visibility of women in politics and leadership, representation alone does not equate to empowerment. The persistent gender gaps in decision-making bodies and the dominance of male-centric informal networks continue to marginalize women's voices. This exclusion not only limits women's influence over policy outcomes but also creates an environment in which their political participation is contested, resisted, and often punished.

Political Violence

GBV constitutes a violation of fundamental political rights and, consequently, the principles of democracy. If we proceed to characterize GBV as political violence, it is defined as the deliberate use of power and force to achieve political goals, designated by both physical and psychological acts aimed at injuring or intimidating populations¹⁵. Violence directed against men is not typically aimed at their gender or status as a representative of a broader social group, the violence against women has the aim to discourage them from being or becoming active in politics because of their gender. The WHO definition of political violence also includes deprivation, the deliberate denial of basic needs and human rights¹⁶.

Unlike structural violence, which is often indirect or covert on systemic levels, political violence is more direct as it involves a specific aggressor and discernible victim. It is majority used by those in power to suppress the existing political social order, ie. inequalities based, for instance, on gender or class, often result in political uprisings and rebellions and in return to the yielding of power through violent repressions that characterize political violence¹⁷.

Inequalities based, for instance, on gender or class, often result in political uprisings and rebellions, which are met with violent repression³. This makes political violence both a tool of authoritarian control and a reflection of deeper systemic injustices.

As such, gender-based political violence does not only seek to silence women's political participation—it escalates into more extreme expressions of state and societal failure. Among these, femicide stands out as the most violent and fatal form of gendered political repression.

⁴ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), *Women and Men in Kenya: Facts and Figures 2022* (Nairobi: KNBS, 2022), 44. The Kadhis' Courts in Kenya are a constitutionally recognized part of the judiciary with jurisdiction limited to matters of personal law—such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance—for Muslims who submit to their authority. These courts apply Islamic law and are presided over by Kadhis, who are typically male due to prevailing religious and cultural interpretations that restrict women from holding such judicial positions. As a result, the Kadhis' Courts remain almost entirely male-dominated.

The Politics of Femicide

Among the most brutal and extreme forms of political violence against women is femicide—the gender-motivated killing of women. The politics of femicide in Kenya is deeply entangled with issues of governance, law enforcement, societal attitudes, and gender power dynamics: Kenya remains a highly patriarchal society. The politics of femicide therefore are based on the normalization and institutionalization of women with impunity. This effectively undermines the roles of state apparatuses and agents play in perpetuating femicide and the correlations between the sovereign's political right and the masculine “right to kill” without profound political or legal repercussions. This alone portrays an abuse of state and male power. The state's inaction in the face of rising femicide rates—combined with impunity for perpetrators—reveals how gender-based killings are embedded within power structures.

“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”¹⁸.

Regarding statistics, as of 2014¹⁹ nearly 50 percent of women have ever experienced physical violence since the age of 15 with almost all these forms of violence committed by their husband or partner. In 2014, a higher percentage of women sought help to stop the violence compared to 2008-09. The proportion increased from around 35% in 2008-09 to approximately 45% in 2014. This suggests a positive trend where more women are seeking help or at least disclosing their experiences, indicating potential progress in awareness or support systems for survivors of violence. While the overall number of women aged 15- 49 who have undergone female genital mutilation has decreased from 39 percent to 20 percent until 2014, it still disproportional-ity affects women at age 5 to 15 years of age as of 2014.

As of 2022, thirty-four percent of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence since age 15. In the last 12 months, 16% of women experienced physical violence²⁰. Thirteen percent of all women have experienced sexual violence; 7% have experienced it in the last 12 months, and four out of ten women in ten women who have ever had a husband or intimate partner (41%) have ever experienced economic, psychological/emotional, physical, or sexual violence perpetrated by their current or most recent husband/intimate partner.

Amongst the above-mentioned statistics, the Kenyan government has ratified international conventions and enacted laws such as the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (2015)⁵ and the Sexual Offences Act (2006)⁶. However, implementation

⁵ *Protection Against Domestic Violence Act*, No. 2 of 2015 (Laws of Kenya). This Act provides a legal framework for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence. It broadens the definition of domestic violence to include not just physical abuse, but also sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse. It empowers courts to issue protection orders and mandates the government to establish support services for survivors. Despite its progressive scope, implementation has been hampered by underfunding, limited public awareness, and institutional reluctance.

⁶ *Sexual Offences Act*, No. 3 of 2006 (Laws of Kenya). This Act was enacted to address the rising incidents of sexual violence and to fill critical gaps in Kenya's criminal law. It defines and criminalizes a broad range of sexual offences—including rape, defilement, sexual harassment, and incest—and

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remains weak due to systemic corruption, lack of political will, and deeply ingrained patriarchal norms. As seen by above statistics, major positions in leadership and decision-making remain male dominated. High-profile femicide cases often spark public outrage, e.g. – leading to short-term government responses, but long-term structural change remains elusive. Political leaders and institutions frequently downplay or dismiss femicide as isolated incidents rather than addressing it as a systemic issue rooted in gender inequality. Furthermore, the criminal justice system is often slow, inefficient, and biased against victims, with many cases going unresolved or perpetrators facing lenient consequences. Activists and feminist movements have played a crucial role in pushing for legal reforms and raising awareness, yet they face opposition from conservative and religious groups that resist shifts in gender norms. The media also plays a political role, as coverage of femicide cases influences public perception, sometimes reinforcing victim-blaming narratives.

Essentially, we then conclude, those in government power and leadership roles, try to manage crime and social issues by reinforcing traditional gender roles, which harm women. At lower levels of government, officials often ignore, or misuse laws meant to protect women, making gender-based violence worse. At higher levels, leaders create policies that put the family above women's safety or replace laws that once supported gender equality. Overall, this way of governing leads to weak crime prevention, blames individuals instead of addressing the bigger issue, and wrongly treats traditional gender roles and the idea of a 'traditional' family as the solution to violence against women.

Ruto's Task Force: A Critical Perspective

Safe Homes- Safe Spaces; the campaign that gained nation-wide attention in December 2024, addressing on the pervasive issue of gender-based violence and the systemic failures in addressing it. In response to the mounting public outcry, President William Ruto's administration established a 24-member Task Force on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, with the goal of investigating root causes, evaluating policy effectiveness, and recommending strategic interventions. The final report from the committee was initially expected within 90 days, with provisions for an extension, if necessary, which was now extended until 8th of June 2025. While the formation of the task force signalled a political acknowledgment of the crisis, its structure, execution, and broader implications have sparked both hope and scepticism. Key demands of the campaign included state-funded shelters and crisis centres for survivors of GBV, a national emergency response mechanism for victims at risk,

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strengthened legal protections and the fast-tracking of GBV cases and finally accountability measures for law enforcement agencies that fail to protect survivors. While the campaign's visibility pressured the government to act, feminist activists remain wary of state co-option, where grassroots demands are absorbed into bureaucratic processes without radical systemic change.

The taskforce came after Kenya marked its national launch the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in Makueni County" on the 25th of November 2024, which was created amid growing pressure from feminist movements, civil society organizations, and international partners who have long criticized Kenya's slow progress in tackling GBV. The wave of activism following the January and December 2024 protests underscored the failure of existing legal and institutional frameworks, with an alarming rise in cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and femicide. Activism took place mainly on social media, #StopKillingWomen, was a major hashtag that was being promoted online.

Critics argue that while the task force demonstrates political responsiveness, it risks being a public relations tool rather than a transformative mechanism for gender justice, a well-established tactic of the president during his years in the office. For instance, Muthoni Wanyeki, a Kenyan political scientist, feminist, and human rights advocate who has held leadership roles at Amnesty International, the Open Society Foundations, and the Kenya Human Rights Commission, has criticized the Kenyan state's tendency to engage in "performative politics," responding to gender crises with rhetoric and advisory bodies that rarely translate into systemic reform²¹. Similarly, FIDA-Kenya⁷ has cautioned that task forces are frequently used as "face-saving measures" that lack the legal authority and financial resources necessary to address GBV meaningfully²². Historically, government-commissioned task forces in Kenya have struggled with implementation gaps, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and political interference, raising concerns about whether this initiative will yield substantive change or merely placate activists. Akoth Obonyo, a Kenyan public policy analyst who has notably critiqued President Ruto's administration for using inclusive rhetoric and policy frameworks as part of a branding strategy, without backing this up with substantive resource commitments or institutional accountability, further contends that Ruto's administration has routinely employed inclusive language and policy frameworks as part of a political branding strategy, without accompanying commitments to resource allocation or institutional accountability²³. In the same vein, FEMNET⁸ warns that government-led processes often co-opt feminist language to

⁷ Federation of Women Lawyers–Kenya (FIDA-Kenya), *About Us*, accessed June 24, 2025, <https://fidakenya.org/about-us/>. FIDA-Kenya is a non-profit, non-partisan women's rights organization that provides legal aid, advocacy, and research aimed at advancing gender equality and justice for women in Kenya.

⁸ **The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)**, founded in 1988 and based in Nairobi, is a pan-African feminist membership organization with over 800 members across approximately 50 countries. It facilitates capacity building, advocacy, networking, and knowledge sharing to amplify African women's voices in governance, leadership, economic justice, sexual and reproductive health rights, and efforts to end gender-based violence and harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage

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gain legitimacy while resisting the structural shifts required for genuine gender transformation²⁴, underscoring the scepticism surrounding the task force's ability to move beyond rhetoric and deliver justice for survivors of GBV in Kenya.

Structural Limitations and Political Implications

While the inclusion of legal experts, human rights defenders, and survivors has been praised as a move towards participatory governance, the initiative is marred by significant structural weaknesses. One of the most pressing concerns is the lack of binding authority; the task force functions in an advisory capacity, which means its recommendations are not legally enforceable, allowing for selective implementation by the state²⁵. Additionally, critics argue that political influence has compromised the task force's credibility, with appointments allegedly favouring government-aligned individuals and marginalizing radical feminist voices who are central to transformative justice²⁶. The funding constraints further weaken the task force's capacity to implement reforms, risking its fate yet another underfunded initiative in Kenya's long history of gender justice rhetoric²⁷. Most troubling is the failure to address institutionalized patriarchy. The task force's emphasis on policy review, rather than structural transformation in law enforcement, the judiciary, and socio-economic systems, undermines its potential to dismantle the deep-rooted power dynamics that perpetuate GBV²⁸.

Scholars and activists stress the need for institutional accountability, such as enforcing strict penalties for GBV perpetrators, ensuring independent oversight to avoid political interference, and investing in survivor-centered services, including psychosocial support, legal aid, and economic empowerment programs²⁹.

Kenya's legal framework is also under scrutiny. Although the country has enacted laws like the *Sexual Offences Act* (2006) and the *Protection Against Domestic Violence Act* (2015), femicide remains undefined in the legal system, creating gaps in prosecution and justice delivery.³⁰ There is a growing call for the recognition of femicide as a distinct crime, as current enforcement mechanisms are hampered by corruption, lack of political will, and systemic misogyny³¹. In the realm of law enforcement and the judiciary, inefficiencies persist—many femicide cases are mishandled due to poor police training, victim-blaming attitudes, and lack of forensic resources, which contributes to a culture of impunity. Activists advocate for specialized femicide units within law enforcement to improve case handling and victim support³².

The socioeconomic dimensions of femicide also demand attention. Many femicide victims face economic dependency and insecurity. Promoting women's access to education, employment, and financial resources is crucial in reducing vulnerability. Likewise, the shortage of safe housing and protection services must be addressed through increased funding and infrastructure development. On the cultural front, political and community leaders must confront and challenge patriarchal norms that normalize violence against women. Education campaigns, gender-sensitive school curricula, and community programs are essential tools in reshaping attitudes.

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Furthermore, engaging men and boys in transforming harmful masculinities is critical to long-term prevention³³.

Finally, there is an urgent need for accurate data collection and research. Kenya lacks a centralized, systematic database on femicide, impeding effective policy development. A femicide observatory could track trends, evaluate interventions, and guide evidence-based decision-making. Kenya's commitment and ratification of international treaties like CEDAW⁹ and the Maputo Protocol¹⁰ obligates it to take stronger domestic action. Civil society organizations, feminist movements, and international actors play a key role in pressuring the government to uphold these obligations and ensure accountability.

Conclusion

As of September 2025, no official update has been released from President Ruto's task force on the results, despite its extended deadline to June 8th, 2025. The silence surrounding its progress underscores the persistent gap between political promises and meaningful structural reform, raising the questions once again if this was a way to silence the public?

While the government's establishment of the task force was initially celebrated as a recognition of the crisis, the absence of concrete outcomes reflects a familiar cycle of performative politics in Kenya's governance, where advisory committees are created to absorb public pressure but fail to deliver substantive change.

The lack of results reaffirms the concerns that the task force would risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative. The continued impunity in femicide cases, weak institutional accountability, and entrenched patriarchal norms remain largely unaddressed, even as new cases of gender-based killings are reported almost weekly in local media.

This ongoing inaction raises critical questions about the state's willingness to confront the structural and systemic roots of gender-based violence. By failing to recognize femicide as a distinct legal crime, underfunding survivor-centered services, and overlooking the role of patriarchal institutions in perpetuating violence, the Kenyan government undermines both its international commitments—such as under CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol—and the demands of its own citizens for justice and protection.

Ultimately, the politics of femicide in Kenya reveal not only the vulnerability of women and girls but also the fragility of state legitimacy when confronted with

⁹ United Nations, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, adopted December 18, 1979, entered into force September 3, 1981. CEDAW is a landmark international treaty that commits signatory states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women through legal, political, economic, and social reforms. Kenya ratified CEDAW in 1984, thereby committing to uphold women's rights under international law.

¹⁰ African Union, *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)*, adopted July 11, 2003, entered into force November 25, 2005. Known as the Maputo Protocol, this treaty expands on the African Charter by explicitly affirming women's rights, including protection from gender-based violence, reproductive health rights, and political participation. Kenya ratified the protocol in 2010.

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widespread gendered violence. Without immediate and radical reforms that go beyond symbolic gestures, femicide will continue to expose the deep contradictions between Kenya's constitutional guarantees of equality and the lived realities of women. The stalled task force is not just a bureaucratic failure—it is a reflection of how women's lives remain negotiable within the broader structures of political power, patriarchy, and impunity.

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Authors

Eva-Maria Okot, Program Officer

Imprint

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Jan-Ole Voß

Project Manager

jan-ole.voss@kas.de

kas.de

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