

Interfaith Roundtable Dialogue on Ending Femicide and Other Forms of GBV in Kenya Press Statement

05 February 2025

Today, We gather here at the Desmond Tutu Conference Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, as a diverse and united family, transcending religious boundaries, to address this deeply troubling and urgent issue that has gripped our nation: the alarming rise in femicide cases in Kenya. Femicide, the intentional killing of women based on their gender, is a grave violation of human rights and an affront to the values we hold dear with the recognition that humanity embodies the image of God.

On January 4, 2024, the stabbing to death of 26-year-old Starlet Wahu a popular Instagram figure in a short-term rental apartment made headlines. On the 14th January days after the brutal murder and dismemberment of a 20-year-old Rita Waeni in Nairobi with her remains scattered by the killer and some stuffed in a plastic bag sent shockwaves throughout our communities. Femicide Count Kenya which monitors killings reported in local news, recorded 58 deaths labelled as femicides between January and October 2022. In 2023, the organisation recorded at least 152 killings¹ – the highest in the past five years and 14 cases have already been reported in January 2024.

The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) indicate that over 40 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime. In all these cases, the blame has shifted from the perpetrators to the victims. This staggering number only represents cases reported in the media and doesn't represent the true count as on average a woman or girl is killed every day, often by a close family member. Violence against women and girls is violence against the entire humankind and should have no place in Kenya or anywhere in the world. It is disheartening to witness the loss of innocent lives, and we extend our deepest condolences to the families affected by these tragic events.

Society's response to gender-based violence can be enhanced if we invest in seeking to understand some of the key drivers of the epidemic. The sacred texts are clear that we must seek knowledge (Baha'u'llah Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp 51-52; Hosea 4: 6 and the Quran 20: 114). Having a fuller understanding of the complexity of gender-based violence will enable us to develop and implement more effective responses. We can no longer remain silent, nor assume that gender-based violence is a 'private issue.' It is in many instances a matter of life and death; a matter of human security, dignity, faith, and human rights and is key to the prosperity of the entire nation.

¹ <https://femicidecount.org/>

Commendation: We commend the media for amplifying the heinous acts of femicide and other forms of GBV and urge them to continue relentlessly. We further commend all other organizations that have condemned the vice, including marching on the streets.

Call to Government: We call on the government of Kenya to hasten to make efforts to bring all perpetrators to justice.

We call on the Government of Kenya to ensure progress towards implementation of the Sexual Offences Act (2006), the National Policy on Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence 2014 outcomes, and the enforcement of all laws and policies that respond to Gender-Based Violence. All relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the government must work in concert with other institutions including law enforcement authorities in mitigating the heinous acts of femicide and other gender-based violence.

We also call on the government to enforce treaties it has ratified on this issue such as The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) among others.

Call to all institutions of learning: We call all institutions of learning to instil value for human life, and respect for the dignity and God's image in every human being

Our Commitment

The faith community in Kenya stands united, transcending religious boundaries to condemn femicide and all other forms of GBV in the strongest terms possible. Our shared commitment to justice, human dignity, and the sanctity of life compels us to address this issue comprehensively and collaboratively. We therefore commit to the following:

1. **Education and Awareness:** We commit to continue educating our congregations and communities on the root causes of femicide and other forms of GBV, dismantling harmful stereotypes, offering mentorship to boychildren during cultural forums such as rites of passage to change the perception of young men towards women and promoting healthy relationships founded on mutual respect and equality right from family level.
2. **Interfaith Collaboration:** We recognize the strength in unity and commit to engaging in continuous interfaith dialogue and collaboration toward addressing toxic societal norms that contribute to femicide for behavioural transformation.
3. We commit to promoting theologies that affirm the dignity and equality of all genders.

4. **Support Services:** We commit to creating awareness of existing support services (hotlines and safe houses). We further commit to establishing and promoting accessible support services, including pastoral counselling, psycho-social intervention and safe spaces, to aid survivors and their families in the aftermath of femicide and other forms of GBV.
5. **Advocacy for strengthening legal frameworks:** We commit to continuous engagement with policymakers to focus on strengthening the legal framework and ensuring its enforcement.

We therefore urge all citizens, irrespective of religious affiliation, to join hands in the fight against femicide. It is our collective responsibility to create a society where women can live free from fear, violence, and discrimination. Together, let us strive for a Kenya where every life is valued, and every woman can realize her full potential without the threat of harm.

We thank you for your attention and collaboration in addressing this urgent matter. May our shared commitment to justice and compassion guide us in the pursuit of a safer and more equitable society.