

Gender-based  
content analysis

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in Macedonian media

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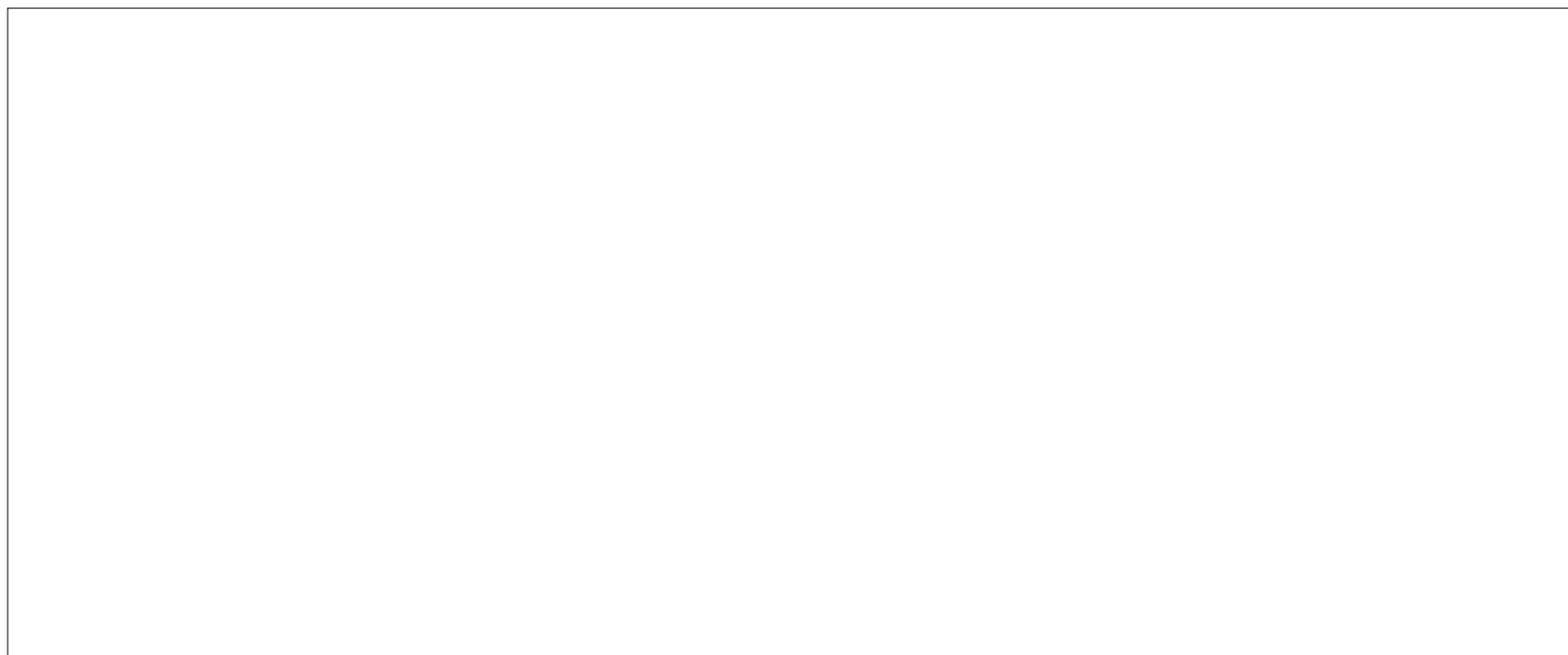
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# Introduction

Femicide - the killing of a woman because she is a woman - is the most extreme manifestation of violence against women, which is most often the result of continuous exposure to violence, where the perpetrators are usually intimate partners, family members or other persons known to the victim.<sup>1</sup> Femicides can occur as a result of various types of traditional views and practices, which are globally widespread to this day. Therefore, in some societies, for example, certain killings of women are still considered justified, such as killing a woman for cheating on her partner.<sup>2</sup>

**In North Macedonia, there are no statistical data on the number of femicides**, so the only sources of unofficial data on femicides in the country are civil society organizations that work in this area and reports by the media regarding the cases. The only data on femicides were collected by the National Network to End Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence “Voice Against Violence” that conducted an analysis of the cases of femicides in the country, during a certain period, by collecting and cross-referencing data from various institutions, organizations and media reports.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the role of the media and their reporting on cases of femicide, as well as the way in which they are presented, is of particular importance. **The media generally play a significant role in the fight against gender-based violence**, and the power of the media is extensive and multifaceted, starting from creating, shaping and changing social attitudes, up to the cultural normalization and strengthening of certain behaviours, stereotypes and prejudice. **The power of the media is often underestimated**, especially in terms of the damage that inadequate reporting can cause for victims of gender-based violence (secondary victimization) and women in general, but

1 Philip, A. (2017). *WAVE Thematic Paper. Preventing and Eradicating Femicide*. WAVE. Available at: [http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/Thematic\\_Paper\\_Femicide\\_15Febr2017.pdf](http://files.wave-network.org/researchreports/Thematic_Paper_Femicide_15Febr2017.pdf)

2 Јовановска, Б. (2022). Невидливи убиства - Фемицидите во Република Северна Македонија. НСРР.

3 See more at [www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk](http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk)

also on the preventive role that the media should play in this area. **The media should be the main promoters of gender equality** and, through their reporting, tear down gender stereotypes, and in their reporting on gender-based violence they should embody their role as an ally in the fight against this phenomenon. Inadequate reporting, without adhering to the ethical standards, can very easily have an adverse effect and contribute to greater discrimination and gender inequality in society.<sup>4</sup>

In order to make an in-depth analysis of the impact of media reporting on femicide cases over the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in society, the Institute of Communication Studies made this analysis titled “Femicide in Macedonian Media”, as part of the “Fact-Based Journalism for Raising Awareness and Countering Disinformation in the Media Space in North Macedonia”, project, which is implemented with the support of the British Embassy in Skopje.

4 Аврамоска Нушкова, А. и Тунева, М. (2021). Прирачник за родово сензитивно известување. ХОПС - Опции за здрав живот Скопје.

# Methodology

The main focus of this analysis is media coverage of femicides, as the most severe form of gender-based violence. The research was conducted using a **qualitative analysis of news reports on cases of femicide, published in the period from September 2022 to January 2023**. The initial research query the analysis aims to answer is how does media coverage of cases of femicide, as the most severe form of gender-based violence, impact the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

The analysis **focuses on two case studies** related to femicide, while their breakdown points to different causes of institutional repression, i.e., (in)efficiency. The first study comprised an analysis of media reports on three individual cases, two of which were murders of women and one was an attempted murder of a woman, all three committed because they were women, i.e., femicides, in North Macedonia, while the second study analysed the media coverage of the protests in Iran ignited by Mahsa Amini's murder. The local cases of femicide/attempted femicide are a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the institutions in dealing with cases of gender-based violence, while in the case of the Iran protests, femicide is a consequence of the *efficient* application of misogynistic laws by the institutions.

For the purposes of this analysis, a **sample of 300 news stories** was analysed for the two case studies. News stories from all online media that covered the cases subject to this analysis were reviewed, without any specific selection of individual media outlets. News reports were analysed in regards to the execution of the legally determined preventive role of the media in the fight against gender-based violence, i.e., the extent of promoting gender equality, breaking down gender stereotypes, raising public awareness of the forms of gender-based violence and the consequences that gender-based violence has on women and society.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the reports were analysed from the

5 *Law on prevention and protection against violence against women and domestic violence. Official Gazette of RNM No. 24/2021 of January 23, 2021*

aspect of adherence to the principles of ethical reporting according to *the Code of Journalists*<sup>6</sup> as well as the *Guidelines for ethical reporting of online media*<sup>7</sup>, which refer to listing the sources of information, the presence of sensationalism in reporting on cases of accidents and family tragedies, disregard for personal privacy and plagiarism. The following aspects were analysed:

- What is the capacity of the media to recognize femicide, as the most severe form of gender-based violence, i.e., the killing of a woman because she is a woman, where there must be an implied intent to commit the murder and a demonstrated connection between the act and the gender of the victim?
- To what extent, through the media coverage of femicides, does the media realize its (legal) preventive role in raising awareness among the general public about all forms of gender-based violence, promoting gender equality and eliminating stereotypes about gender roles?
- How does media reporting correlate institutional repression and women's rights?
- To what extent does the media reporting include an analysis of the socio-political context in which the action of the specific case takes place?
- To what extent does the media use gender-sensitive language?
- What kind of visual materials are used in the news reports?
- What kind of sources do they use to create the content of the news reports?
- Are journalistic and ethical standards adhered to during reporting and to what extent?
- Do the media use sensationalist language when creating headlines in order to attract a larger number of readers, with headlines that don't capture the essence of the case and minimize the violence?
- What is the effect of news reports in the building of certain social attitudes about gender - based violence?
- What is the effect of spill-over of the views expressed in the news reports on the public awareness?

6 Code of journalists of Macedonia. Available at: <https://znm.org.mk/kodeks-na-novinarite-na-makedonija/>

7 <https://semm.mk/attachments/>

# Context of the analysis

Of particular importance to this analysis is the review of the relevant regulatory framework relating to media reporting, which includes self-regulation and regulatory legal provisions.

In self-regulation, **with a focus on online journalism**, what is significant to mention is that it is a matter of mandatory adherence to generally accepted rules, it is not optional.<sup>8</sup> *The Journalists' Code*<sup>9</sup> together with *the Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media*<sup>10</sup> contain guidelines for ethical reporting on issues related to human rights and dignity. According to the *International Federation of Journalists' Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists*, a journalist should be aware of the danger of discrimination that may be supported by the media and should do everything to avoid supporting such discrimination, among other things, on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, and nationality or social background.<sup>11</sup>

In regards to the legislation, the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)<sup>12</sup> is of significance, and it contains a separate section focusing on the role of the media from an aspect of eradicating gender stereotypes. The general obligations arising from the Convention refer to taking measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men, with the aim of eradicating prejudice, customs, traditions and all other practices that are based on the idea of inferiority of

8 Sarikakis K. (2021). *Guidelines of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services on monitoring of the application of reporting standards in gender-based violence cases in the media*. Council of Europe.

9 Code of journalists of Macedonia. Available at: <https://znm.org.mk/kodeks-na-novinarite-na-makedonija/>

10 <https://semm.mk/attachments/>

11 Declaration of principles on the conduct of journalists. Available at: <https://semm.mk>

12 *The Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*. Istanbul, 11.V.2011



women or on the stereotypical roles of women and men, while the recommendations for the press are aimed at encouraging participation in the development and implementation of policies with due respect for freedom of expression and independence and establishing guidelines and self-regulatory standards for the prevention of violence against women and for increasing of respect for their dignity.

The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services<sup>13</sup> defines the principles that broadcasters should follow when performing their activities, which include fostering and developing people's humane and moral values and the protection of people's privacy and dignity, equality of freedoms and rights regardless of gender, race, national, ethnic and social background, political and religious conviction, wealth and social standing of the person and the citizen, protection of the identity of the victims of violence, objective and impartial presentation of events with equal treatment of different points of view and opinions and enabling free forming of opinion by the audience on separate events and issues.

The Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence<sup>14</sup> refers to the role of the media in the fight against gender-based violence in several articles and assigns particular importance to the preventive role of the media through the promotion of gender equality, breaking down gender stereotypes, raising public awareness of the forms of gender-based violence and the serious consequences that gender-based violence has on women and society.

A number of manuals and studies talk about how important it is to report on gender-based violence and that every voice counts if it contributes to this phenomenon being recognized, reported, prevented or, ideally, eradicated. However, reporting goes hand in hand with the language used, the headline, the photos, the terminology, the given context, the sources used and the numbers presented. In 2019, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published *the Handbook for Journalists*

13 *The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Official Gazette of RM no. 184/13, 13/14, 44/14, 101/14, 132/14, 142/16, 132/17, 168/18, 248/18 and 27/19 and Official Gazette of RNM no. 42/20 and 77/21*

14 *Law on Prevention and Protection against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. Official Gazette of RNM No. 24/2021 of January 23, 2021*

*Reporting on Violence Against Women and Girls*<sup>15</sup>, which contains comprehensive guidelines for ethical media reporting and analyses the effects that reporting can have on society, with a focus on women as the most frequent victims of this type of violence.

15 Impe, A. (2019). *Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls. A Handbook for Journalists*. UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/document>



## Case study: **Femicides in North Macedonia**

As part of this study, **the media coverage was analysed in relation to three separate cases, of which two cases of femicide and one attempted femicide, which occurred in January 2023, in Skopje, Strumica and Veles.** The first case is the murder of two women aged around 60 and 80, who were killed on 10.01.2023 in their home on Ruzveltova Street in Skopje. They were killed by their son, i.e., grandson. The second analysed case happened on January 20, 2023 in Strumica, it was a murder of an 83-year-old woman in her home, committed by her grandson. The last case is the attempted murder of a 23-year-old girl by her partner on January 26, 2023 in Veles, in which the perpetrator committed suicide when the police tried to arrest him.

Most of the time, the first news reports about the murders **do not contain a lot of information** and refer to unofficial information or initial reports from the police. However, further reporting regarding the murders usually consists of

short texts and the sources they use are limited to the announcements of the relevant institutions, most often the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and/or the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office (BPPO). The reports are generic, factual and significantly resemble or are identical to each other and are often transmitted with the same or slightly modified headlines, and almost identical content and order of reporting.

**Additional sources are used very rarely in journalistic reporting,** and relevant statistics and statements were used only in two original announcements about the case of femicide in Skopje and in one announcement about the case in Veles. For example, one of the news reports about the case in Skopje with the headline “66 women killed in 10 years in Macedonia - two were children aged 5-14”,<sup>16</sup> following the case, provides an analysis of cases of murder of women through data from The State Statistical Office, while not taking into account the fact that not all murders of women are femicides, that is, murders of a woman because she is a woman. The report also includes a statement from the National Council for Gender Equality (NCGE) on non-reporting of violence, as well as on the need for legal changes in the direction of criminalizing femicide. In the second news report headlined “Yesterday's double murder in Skopje once again brings to the fore the issue of the increasingly frequent cases of domestic violence that end fatally, in which the victims are mostly women”<sup>17</sup>, a statement by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Jovana Trenchevska, is included, informing that the case was not preceded by violence, i.e., there were no previous reports in the Intermunicipal Centre for Social Work, as well as a statement from NCGE. The text was accompanied by a video, in which, in addition to the text and statements, short clips showing violence against women were broadcast. Regarding the case in Veles, only one media outlet published a report one day after the murder, titled “Cases of domestic violence happen almost daily - In 2008 he kills his brother, yesterday he shoots his female cohabitating partner, and then kills himself!”<sup>18</sup> which gives a slightly more extensive analysis of domestic violence, but also of other cases of femicide.

16 [66 women killed in 10 years in Macedonia - two were children ages 5 to 14 \(4news.mk\)](#)

17 [After killing his mother and grandmother, the man from Skopje left to kill his uncle - Kanal 5 \(kanal5.com.mk\)](#)

18 [Cases of domestic violence happening almost every day - In 2008 he killed his brother, yesterday he shot his female cohabitating partner, and then he killed himself! | Vecer...1963 | Vecer MK](#)

In news reports, **the gender dimension of murders is not recognized** at all, nor is the phenomenology of femicides taken into account, especially that most of these murders are committed by male partners or relatives, in the home where the victim lives. In addition, **the socio-political context in which the action takes place is not at all subject to analysis and no correlation is made at all with the institutional aspect.** Barring one case, where the institution is only a source of statistical data on violence, the analysis of the news reports indicates that they do not at all take into account the role of the institutions in the prevention and protection against violence, which in our country is one of the most significant factors for violence escalating into femicide. Only the news reports that convey information about the investigation by the Public Prosecutor's Office into the case in Skopje recognize that it is a case of *murder during domestic violence, in the family home on "Franklin Ruzvelt" Street, the suspect took the life of his mother and grandmother, inflicting multiple stab wounds on them,* however, the reason for recognizing the form of violence is solely in reference to the announcement of the BPPPO. The media outlet does not use the term *femicide*.

**The language used in news reports is gender-insensitive,** that is, it reduces the severity of the violence because it does not recognize the death of women as a direct consequence of their gender identity. Despite the fact that gender stereotypes are not directly promoted in the news reports, the victim's voice is passive, which actually contributes to the persistence of the gender stereotype of the inferior position of women in society.

In the reporting of all three cases, the media focus on the element of the event that provides grounds for **sensationalistic headlines,** so they very often use words such as: drama, tragedy, horror, shock, crime, morbid, bizarre, which do not portray the essence of the case itself.

The case in Skopje attracted the most attention from the media, considering that almost 100 news reports related to the case were published over a two-day period. The focus is on the fact that it is a double murder and the fact that the perpetrator spent the night in the same apartment as the already murdered women, so the most common headlines tend to include these two elements. Hence, there were- titles like "BIZARRE EVENT IN THE CENTRE OF SKOPJE – person not only kills his mother and grandmother, but also sleeps with the

dead bodies in the apartment”<sup>19</sup> and “Monstrous act in the centre of Skopje: Person not only kills his mother and grandmother, but also sleeps with the dead bodies in the apartment – The next morning he wanted to kill his uncle as well.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, one of the first news reports regarding the case was published by *PRESS 24* and the headline was “Double murder: Man slaughters his mother and grandmother in an apartment in Skopje”, with a large part of the media outlets taking over the news from this outlet<sup>21</sup>, repeating the narrative that the perpetrator *slaughtered* the victims, which is inappropriate and disrespectful to the victims themselves. The spill-over of inappropriate terminology in news reports is also visible in the example of the announcement “Horror on Ruzvelt Street: Man slaughters his mother and grandmother in an apartment in Skopje”<sup>22</sup>, which contributes to a large part of further reports using the term *horror* in their headlines about the case. Moreover, several media outlets shared unofficial information from *Lokalno.mk* about the perpetrator’s state of mind, according to which *the killer suffered from schizophrenia and reported the murders himself*<sup>23</sup>, and *Sitel* published a video from the news<sup>24</sup>, which was broadcast by several media outlets, of interviews with the neighbours who provide only some general information about the perpetrator, whom they obviously did not know personally.

Regarding the case in Strumica, which, according to the number of news reports, attracted the least attention, the focus was on the age of the victim, often being referred to as an *old woman* in news reports.<sup>25</sup> Five days after the murder, only two outlets reported the announcement by the Ministry of Interior that the perpetrator of the murder was related to the victim, that is, he was her grandson. Furthermore, several media outlets, in addition to the text, also broadcast the video of the case from the YouTube channel of the *24 Vesti*

19 [A BIZARRE EVENT IN THE MIDDLE OF SKOPJE - he not only killed his mother and grandmother, but also slept with the dead bodies in the apartment \(faktor.mk\)](#)

20 [A monstrous act in the centre of Skopje: He not only killed his mother and grandmother, but also slept with the dead bodies in the apartment - The next morning he wanted to kill his uncle as well - VoStip](#)

21 [Double murder: Man slaughters his mother and grandmother in an apartment in Skopje Press24](#)

22 [Horror on Ruzvelt Street: Man slaughters his mother and grandmother in an apartment in Skopje - Republika \(republika.mk\)](#)

23 [Double murder on “Rooseveltova”, a man killed his mother and grandmother - Lokalno \(lokalno.mk\)](#)

24 [Double murder in the centre of Skopje - two women killed - Sitel Television \(sitel.com.mk\)](#)

25 [Woman strangled in her own home - DUMA.mk \(duma.mk\)](#)

TV station<sup>26</sup>, while using clickbait headlines about the way the murder was committed, such as “(Video) THE OLD WOMAN IN STRUMICA WAS MURDERED - the police are looking for the perpetrator, this is how the crime was committed!”<sup>27</sup>

After the publication of a few initial reports, further news reports about the case in Veles predominantly featured headlines that focus entirely on the perpetrator, i.e., his arrest, suicide, and later that he was already convicted of murdering his brother, such as “ DEAD MAN FOUND THIS MORNING SHOT A 25-YEAR-OLD GIRL - he had previously killed her brother, here are the details!”<sup>28</sup> and “DRAMA IN VELES - AFTER BEING SURROUNDED BY POLICE: Man who beat, then shot in the stomach and wounded a 25-year-old girl from Veles this morning, committed suicide”<sup>29</sup>. Majority of the news reports convey the announcement from the Internal Affairs Sector in Veles, in which, among other things, it is said that the woman was injured by *her male cohabitating partner* (\*translator’s note: “unwed husband” being a more literal translation), and this inappropriate terminology is adopted by a large part of the media in their headlines as well. A media outlet published the name and surname of the suspect.<sup>30</sup> It was only later in the evening that several media announced the condition of the victim.

**The photos used in news reports are mostly generic and the source of the photos is not listed in almost any of them.** A number of the reports are accompanied by photos with police emblems and vehicles, images of the BPPO building, as well as weapons and blood, and significantly fewer images of violence, which, in addition to being disturbing, do not convey adequate information about the event. Several media outlets showed a photo of the suspected perpetrator of the murders in Skopje, which they took from the post “PHOTO I The killer of two women from ‘Ruzveltova’ Street, apartment covered

26 [The 83-year-old woman from Strumica was murdered, the perpetrator is being sought - YouTube](#)

27 [INFOMAX.MK](#)

28 [MAN WHO SHOT A 25-YEAR-OLD GIRL FOUND DEAD THIS MORNING – he had killed his brother before, here are the details! \(centar.mk\)](#)

29 [DRAMA IN VELES - AFTER BEING SURROUNDED BY POLICE: The man who beat, then shot and wounded the 25-year-old girl from Veles in the stomach this morning, committed suicide - MAKTEL \(maktel.mk\)](#)

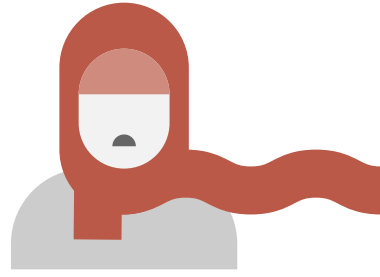
30 [The man from Veles, who this morning beat and shot a 25-year-old girl, committed suicide in the afternoon - he did not allow himself to be arrested by the police \(makedonskivesnik.com\)](#)

in blood”<sup>31</sup>, with no mention of the source, nor if there is consent for its publication.

Almost all news reports are shared through official media channels on social media. Most of the comments on social networks show sympathy for the victims and strong condemnation of violence, which sometimes turns into threats of violent behaviour and/or insults directed at the perpetrator, calling him a monster, sick, drug addict, etc. However, although less often, there are also comments that justify the violent acts, for instance: *It's good he's put up with them for so long! Greetings to the hero!!* or: *What kind of a lunatic decides to go to jail over a woman?*

31 [PHOTO I The killer of two women from “Ruzvelt” Street, apartment covered in blood - Vecer \(vecer.mk\)](#)





## Case Study: **Protests in Iran**

This case study analysed **the media coverage of the femicide of Mahsa Amini in Iran by the morality police and the protests that were organized and carried out on the wake of the femicide.** The case concerns a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, who was detained by the *morality police* on September 13, 2022, because she allegedly did not follow the rules for appropriately wearing a hijab. During her arrest by the police, excessive force was used on her, which turned into police brutality, from which Amini received fatal injuries. This was confirmed by witnesses of the event, although the police later completely denied these allegations and informed that Amini suddenly lost consciousness at the police station and was taken to hospital. On the same day, Amini was hospitalized in an unconscious state and was diagnosed as brain dead, and three days later, on September 16, 2022, she died. The killing of Amini caused violent and loud reactions in Iran, where protests started on the same day, which are still ongoing.

**153 news reports from the media were analysed,** which focused on the murder and the protests in the wake of the murder of the Iranian woman Mahsa Amini by the *morality police*, as well as the reactions that this murder caused in Iran and in the world. In addition, news related to the development of the protests and events in the following two months after the murder were

analysed in order to show what effect the protests had later and how they were covered. The news were analysed chronologically from the starting date, when the first story about the murder was published. For the purposes of this analysis, a more detailed review of the initial reports on the case will be given, while the current report will be analysed more generally, pointing out bad and good practices.

As with the first case study, here too, the basis is femicide, and the commonality is that in both cases it is about institutional repression, with the difference that in the case of the protests in Iran, femicide is a consequence of the *effective* application of misogynistic laws by the institutions.

The murder of Mahsa Amini took place on 16.09.2022 and while the news of the world immediately reported it, in our country we registered only one news story on the day of her death, with the headline “Rage in Iran over a young woman’s death after being arrested by the morality police”<sup>32</sup>. In the report, the media outlet uses terms such as police brutality, gives context to the events and the murder, which comes at a time of increased repression against women in Iran, conveys information provided by both the police and witnesses, and does not include speculation. In contrast to this, the news report uses photographs from the hospital, in which the victim is unconscious and for which neither the source nor the possible consent for publication is indicated.

The very next day, September 17, 2022, interest in reporting increases and four more media outlets report on the developments. What was noticed from the initial reporting on the murder and the protests in the wake of the murder of Amini, is that, in general, the media gives context to the events and conveys statements from the police and from witnesses and relatives of the victim. But what was also noticeable is that **very few of them use appropriate terminology and language in accordance with reporting standards in cases of gender-based violence, almost all of them use inappropriate photos, in which the victim is unconscious and lying in the hospital, and none of the media clearly connects the brutality with the consequence - death, that is, the killing of a woman because she is a woman (femicide).**

32 [Anger in Iran over a young woman’s death after being arrested by the morality police - Nezavisen Vesnik \(nezavisen.mk\)](https://www.nezavisen.mk)

A good example of using appropriate terminology, despite the sensationalism in the headline, is the news headlined “POLICE BEATS HER TO DEATH FOR IMMORALITY, BLOODY RE-EDUCATION: Young Iranian woman dies from police brutality”<sup>33</sup>, where the terms: police brutality, femicide, murder and death as a result of police brutality are used, but so are inappropriate photographs of the victim.

In the news report headlined “Young Iranian woman ‘re-educated’ to death for improperly wearing a hijab (VIDEO)”<sup>34</sup>, although the headline states that Amini was wearing hijab improperly, the report inconsistently states that she was not wearing a hijab and therefore was arrested. There is no mention of brutality or murder in the body of the report, although the headline clearly points to it. Context of the repressive laws is given and reactions from international bodies are relayed.

The news report headlined “Protests and international condemnation following the death of 22-year-old Iranian woman who died after being arrested by the morality police”<sup>35</sup> does not mention killing as a result of police brutality, but uses terms such as *suspicious death* and *severe beating*. Context is given only briefly and reactions and demands for accountability are conveyed.

The very next day, 18.09.2022, 12 reports were registered on the death of Amini and the protests in Iran. Most of the reports focus on the protests and anger among women and all of Iran over Amini’s death. The most common headlines were “The death of the young Iranian woman got the country up on its feet: Angry women started burning their hijabs and cutting their hair”<sup>36</sup>, “Iranian women took off their hijab in protest over the death of a girl in custody: She was severely beaten by the morality police”<sup>37</sup> and “Protests in Iran after the

33 [faktor.mk](#)

34 [A young Iranian woman was “re-educated” to death for wearing a hijab incorrectly \(VIDEO\) - Vecer \(vecer.mk\)](#)

35 [Protests and international condemnation after the death of a 22-year-old Iranian woman who died after being arrested by the morality police \(slobodnaevropa.mk\)](#)

36 [The death of the young Iranian woman brought the country to its feet: Angry women started burning their hijabs and cutting their hair - Sloboden Pecat \(slobodenpecat.mk\)](#)

37 [Iranian women took off their hijabs in protest over the death of a girl in custody: She was severely beaten by the morality police/VIDEO | Vecer...1963 | Vecer MK](#)

‘morality police’ beat a girl to death because of a hijab”<sup>38</sup>. Among the web-portals that had already published the news the previous day, there was a good connection and flow of reporting, by providing additional context and development of the events, but also the bad practice of using inappropriate terminology, language and accompanying photos continued. A big percentage of the headlines, as well as the news reports themselves, point to the Iranian woman’s death as a consequence of improperly wearing the hijab, while placing the blame on the woman’s *disobedience* and the death as a result of such disobedience (“Death of young Iranian woman due to improperly wearing a hijab brought women to their feet – Angry, they started burning their hijabs and cutting their hair”<sup>39</sup>). A very small number of web-portals directly link the death to police brutality as a result of Iran’s misogynistic laws and use language like *she fell into a coma and died after being arrested*<sup>40</sup>. Some of the news reports do not provide any additional context and matter-of-factly convey the information without additional sources.<sup>41</sup>

In the following days, the number of reports about this case grew as a result of reactions by the United Nations, the European Union, Amnesty International and the first cases of murders during the protests. What is noticeable in the reporting is that none of the news reports use terms such as gender-based violence, femicide, gender-based murder, violence against women and girls, human rights violations, and usually do not provide a broader context for the violations of women’s rights in Iran and the repression that women face in that country. Moreover, no news reports have provided any additional research and statistics on other cases of arrests, violence, police brutality and killings of women in Iran by the *morality police*, which basically have misogynist repressive Iranian laws. One report said: *Many Iranians, especially young people, saw the 22-year-old girl’s death as part of the Islamic Republic’s crackdown on dissent*

38 [Protests in Iran, after the “morality police” beat a girl to death because of a hijab \(VIDEO\) - Kanal 5 \(kanal5.com.mk\)](#)

39 [The death of the young Iranian woman brought the country to its feet: Angry women started burning their hijabs and cutting their hair - Sloboden pecat.mk](#) “The death of the young Iranian woman due to improper wearing of a hijab brought women to their feet - Angry women start burning their hijabs and cutting their hair - Vecer (vecer.mk)

40 [Violent protests in Iran after the death of a girl detained for improperly wearing a hijab - Are there dead? - Vecer \(vecer.mk\)](#)

41 [In Iran, a girl died after being beaten by the police for morality \(tv21.tv\)](#)

*and increasingly violent morality policing of young women.*<sup>42</sup> The language used diminishes the gravity of the case itself and the repression that women in Iran face daily, because Amini's death is a direct consequence of police brutality and repression against women that cannot be otherwise *understood* or interpreted.

From the analysis of the reporting on social networks, it was evident that most of the posts had no comments or had a few comments expressing pity for the victim and condemnation of police brutality. This indicates that either the news was not getting enough traction for comments or that inappropriate comments were deleted by the media itself.

Reports in the following days referred to the increase in the number of people who died during the protests, where the number rose to over 30 people, a week after they started. What could be seen in the later reports is a change in the language of the media, who now use the term murder more often and associate it with the actions of the police, i.e., with its brutality. In one of the news reports, it is stated that *the cause of the riots across Iran is the death of Amini, who was killed by the police because she was wearing a hijab incorrectly*<sup>43</sup>. The photos used in almost all posts were from the protests, and photos from Amini were used less often. What is noticeable is that at this stage the reporting is reduced to the sharing of factual data and the news reports largely resemble each other. Only in the reporting on new murders of women during the protests is there an improvement in language and terminology with the use of *murder of a woman* and *the police killed her in a brutal way*<sup>44</sup>.

**Unlike the Macedonian media, the media across Europe paid much more attention to the context in which the murder of Amini took place. The focus was on the struggle for autonomy over one's own body and freedom over one's life. The coverage was based on the violation of human rights through gender-based violence and femicide as its consequence. Far from the promise of the revolution for freedom and social justice, the media portrayed the Iranian**

42 [Protests in Iran: Women burn hijabs because of the murder of the young girl \(VIDEO\) - Kanal 5 \(kanal5.com.mk\)](https://www.kanal5.com.mk)

43 [The number of victims in the riots in Iran rose to 31 people - Nezavisen Vesnik \(nezavisen.mk\)](https://www.nezavisen.mk)

44  [\(VIDEO\) Another murder of a girl in Iran: Without a hijab, she headed towards the police, who fired six bullets at her \(a1on.mk\)](https://www.a1on.mk)

**regime as imposing repressive regulations on women's bodies.** <sup>45</sup> Terms such as *women's revolution*<sup>46</sup> are rarely mentioned in our media and only the term 'protest' is used more often, without broader context. In the news reports of only one media outlet, a greater interest in the wider context was noted and there is consistency in reporting over the months with criticism of human rights violations. One of the news reports of this outlet stated that *in the 21st century, the trend of restricting the rights of women around the world is still present. Unfortunately, in some countries, women are second-class citizens, they are imprisoned and killed just because of their attitude and "indecent" clothing. This past year has marked solidarity amongst and with women in Iran, and 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini has become a symbol of defiance*<sup>47</sup>.

45 See more at: <https://www.media-diversity.org>

46 [VIDEO: The "Women's Revolution" in Iran flared up in a massacre, eight people killed - Sloboden pecat.mk](#)

47 [Women, life, freedom - can Iranian women defeat theocracy - Sloboden Pecat \(slobodenpecat.mk\)](#)

# Final discussion

Starting from the premise that femicide is the killing of a woman for being a woman, where there must be an implied intent to commit the murder and a demonstrated connection between the act and the gender of the victim, the analysis of the cases indicates the **relatively low capacity of the media to identify femicide**, as the most severe form of gender-based violence. Femicide as such is almost completely unrecognized by the media when reporting on the protests in Iran, where there is no direct connection made between the violence and brutality with the consequence - death. Even in the cases in North Macedonia, the gender component of the murders of women is not recognized, nor is the phenomenology of femicides taken into account, especially that most of these murders are committed by male partners or relatives, in the home where the victim lives.

**There is a significant lack of analysis of the socio-political context** in which the action of the cases takes place, which is particularly evident in the news reports on the cases of femicide in North Macedonia. News reports on the protests in Iran paid very little attention to the context in which the killing and the protests took place, and only a fraction of the media pay attention to the broader context and consistently report on how the protests reflected on the lives of women and what this “revolution” means for women in Iran.

Furthermore, in terms of their correlation with the institutional aspect, the analysis of news reports on local cases indicates that they do **not at all take into account the role of institutions in preventing and protecting against violence, especially femicide**, except in one case, where the institution was only a source of statistics on violence. In the case of the protests in Iran, the institutional repression against women was represented by the media through the reporting of the “morality police” as a tool of repression, and the law and the government that enacted it as the source of the repression. **The reporting usually aimed to inform** about the formation and function of the police and, although some of the news reports made a correlation between the law and the

police as a source of repression and the violation of the human rights of women as the subject of that repression, the connection was still superficial and did indicate criticism. The repressive practice was taken as unchangeable because *it is simply the law there*.

The case analysis shows that **in-depth and analytical journalism is almost non-existent, regardless if it is reporting on domestic cases or cases from abroad**. A large number of news reports are generic, factual and substantially similar or identical to each other. The news is often published with the same or slightly modified headlines, and almost identical content and order of reporting. Local case reports were usually brief and the sources they used were limited to the announcements of the relevant institutions. Additional sources were used very rarely, and relevant statistics and statements were used only in two original reports about the case of femicide in Skopje and in one report about the case in Veles.

**Gender-sensitive language is hardly used** in news reports. Despite the fact that the reports do not directly promote gender stereotypes, the voice of the victim is of secondary importance, which actually **perpetuates the gender stereotype of the inferiority of women in society**. In addition, **most of the media use sensationalist language** when creating headlines, in order to attract a larger number of readers, very often with the use of clickbait - headlines that contain words such as: drama, tragedy, horror, shock, crime, morbid, bizarre, which are insensitive to the essence of the case. In the case of the protests in Iran, some of the headlines, although sensationalistic, did not minimize the violence at the same time, i.e., it was possible to notice a minimization of the violence more as a result of inappropriate terminology.

**The use of visual materials in news reports is inappropriate** in several respects. It is particularly problematic that the source of the photos is not mentioned nearly anywhere. Thus, photos of Amini were used in which the victim is unconscious, and it is clear that she could not have given her consent for those photos, which indicates the probability of their unauthorized use. Photos with police emblems, as well as weapons and blood are often used, which, in addition to being disturbing, do not convey adequate information about the event.



Regarding the adherence to journalistic and ethical standards in reporting, **the analysis indicates a violation of several principles from** the Code of Journalists of Macedonia through not specifying the source of information, plagiarism, disrespecting the privacy of the person, as well as the presence of sensationalism when reporting on cases of accidents and family tragedies.<sup>48</sup>

According to the analysis of the reporting on social networks and the comments on the posts related to the cases, most of them are in the direction of pity for the victim or condemnation of the murder and the perpetrator, which sometimes turns into threats of violent behaviour and/or insults directed at the perpetrator. Although less common, there are also comments that justify the violence and that point to the traditional subordination of the woman in the home, implying she probably caused the violence herself. The significantly small number of comments on the Iran reports indicates that either the news had insufficient traction to get comments or that inappropriate comments were deleted by the outlet itself.

**When it comes to the preventive function of raising awareness among the general public** about all forms of gender-based violence, as well as promoting gender equality and eliminating stereotypes about gender roles, which is also legally determined, the analysis of **media coverage of femicides indicates the alarmingly low level** at which the media are performing this role.

Taking into account all the stated conclusions, we could conclude that **the media do not have significant influence on the building of certain social attitudes on gender-based violence**, i.e., they do not have a positive effect on the creation of social opinion in terms of familiarization with the phenomenology of gender-based violence and femicide as its most severe form, its characteristics and negative consequences on women. Thus, the media neglects its preventive role and allows the persistence of gender stereotypes related to violence.

48 Code of journalists of Macedonia. Available at: <https://znm.org.mk/kodeks-na-novinarite-na-makedonija/>

# Concluding remarks

Taking into account the analysis of the news reports and the stated arguments in the final discussion, the following key observations are made regarding media coverage of cases of femicide as the most severe form of gender-based violence:

- The media do not have significant influence on the building of certain social attitudes about gender-based violence;
- The media have a relatively low capacity to recognize femicide;
- There is a significant lack of analysis of the socio-political context;
- The media do not take into account the role of institutions in preventing and protecting against gender-based violence, especially femicide;
- The media do not use gender-sensitive language and perpetuate the gender stereotype of women's inferiority in society;
- Most of the media use sensationalist language, especially in the headlines of news reports;
- The use of visual materials in news reports is inappropriate;
- Several principles from the Code of Journalists of Macedonia have been violated in the news reports;
- In-depth and analytical journalism is almost non-existent, both in reporting on national or foreign cases;
- Media coverage of femicides indicates a low level of performance of the preventive function of raising awareness among the general public.



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