



UNCSW Background Paper

Committee: UNCSW (United Nations Commission on the Status of Women)

Topic: Investigation of femicide and how to reduce cases in South Africa.

Written by: Valeria Treviño and Bella Yañez

Moderator: Valeria Treviño Leal

Director: Bella Yañez

Letter to delegates

Hello Delegates!

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to this year's SPISMUN. We, Valeria Treviño and Bella Yañez, are so excited to have you here! MUNs are filled with thrilling experiences and memories you will cherish forever and we are so excited to guide you throughout the sessions of UNCSW as your chair. We hope we can make this an unforgettable experience for all of you. And we look forward to seeing you delegates debate and share meaningful ideas to address this issue.

We are gathered under the UNCSW to address one of the most urgent crises in South Africa today: the alarming rate of femicide. Every day, women lose their lives simply because of their gender, this is not only a major problem that affects us worldwide but also a direct violation of fundamental human rights. Throughout our sessions, your task will be to solve this urgent need since it's a matter of life and death.

Remember, this is an actual issue that we face daily, so make an effort to innovate solutions that can actually help contribute to solving this matter. Apart from discussing this topic, take this opportunity to build lifelong connections and to seize this moment to the fullest. We hope you have an amazing time at this MUN and make lots of amazing memories. Remember to participate as much as you can and always be your best!

Good luck to you all, delegates!

History of committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was founded in February 1947, shortly after the establishment of the United Nations. The UN decided that the Economic and Social Affairs Council (ECOSOC) should create a subcommission composed of six members from China, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, France, India, Lebanon, and Poland to assess the problems relating to the status of women. The group initially focused on promoting political rights and made recommendations to improve civil, educational, social, and economic conditions. As a result, a report was made calling for a "United Nations Women's Conference to further the programme".

By June 1946, the subcommission had evolved into the Commission on the Status of Women as one of ECOSOC's subsidiary bodies. CSW emerged as a global intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women in all aspects of society.

CSW began drafting conventions and setting standards aimed at eliminating discriminatory laws. It contributed to making the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) gender-inclusive, supported the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953), and advanced in many other significant initiatives. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Commission played a major role in shaping the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967), which inspired the creation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For decades, the Commission on the Status of Women has served as the main global policymaking body leading to major progress in gender equality and women's empowerment. Its efforts have helped shape international norms that continue to improve the lives of women and girls all around the world.

History of the topic

Femicide refers to the intentional murder of women and girls because of their gender. It is considered as the most extreme and brutal form of violence against women. Gender based violence and discrimination have long been accepted and condoned. From thousands of years ago, when women were only seen as a way to have children and couldn't vote, study, and decide on their life's choices. They were seen as objects. Gender based violence and femicide are a complex intractable issues. The first documented use of the term was in 1801 in a book by John Corry. However, in 1976 it was reintroduced by Professor Diana Russel at the International Tribunal of Crimes Against Women in the way we use nowadays, "the killing of one or more females by one or more males because they are female." Femicide was defined as "the murder of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women" and "The misogynistic killings of women by men" until Russel reintroduced it at the United Nations Symposium on the 26th of November of 2012.

From 1970 through the late 1990s, feminicide was not recognized in law even though this issue is centuries old. It only started to be recognized in the late nineties, Spain being the first in 1996. It has progressed over the last years, but only a decade later, in 2006, a handful of countries started recognizing femicide and criminalizing it with definitions and penalizing those who committed the crime.

South Africa has historically had high levels of gender based violence and femicide. They are linked to the apartheid era. The Apartheid era was a racial segregation. Under the all white government of

South Africa, which required non white South Africans to live separately from the white people and use different facilities. It existed from 1948 to 1994, and it created inequality and social instability. In an era where women were already discriminated against , apartheid era women were not only discriminated for being women but also for being Black. Violence was widespread, and the government focused on political control rather than the protection of women, which allowed gender based crimes to go unpunished. Women had a crucial role in the movements against this legislation, and in 1994 the new government, free from the apartheid legislation, strengthened legal protections. Among those, they included The Domestic Violence Act (1998) and The Sexual Offences Act.

South Africa's femicide and discrimination come largely from their culture. Women are seen as the center of the household and the caretakers of the children, like in many cultures. They are expected to handle domestic work and caregiving. Many African societies have been male dominated and women have had limited power in land, marriage, or authority. Domestic abuse is often seen as a private family issue within rural African communities. In Africa, arranged marriages still exist, and it is common for a girl to be married off at a young age to a husband that has many wives.

Introduction to the topic

Femicide, the intentional killing of women and girls because of their gender, is one of the most widespread and devastating forms of violence that affects women and girls all around the world. This kind of violence mostly comes from deep social problems like sexism, gender inequality, and discrimination. In many cases, femicide happens within families or relationships, where women suffer abuse from people they know and trust. Other times, it occurs in public places, where women are targeted because of their gender and even for rejecting male attention.

Femicide has gained more attention in recent years due to people speaking out and demanding justice. Many countries now collect data and pass laws to punish offenders more harshly, yet the numbers remain alarmingly high. The rise in public awareness has also encouraged movements and organizations to take action, raising their voices to promote gender equality and protect women's rights. However, despite these efforts, many cases of femicide go unreported or unresolved, often because of weak legal systems, lack of evidence, or social stigma that discourages victims from seeking help. In some places, harmful gender roles and cultural beliefs continue to normalize violence against women. Education, awareness, and stronger enforcement of laws are essential to preventing these crimes and ensuring that women and girls can live without fear. Ending femicide requires global efforts and serious commitment that involve not just governments and laws, but also communities, families, and individuals that help stop these violent crimes. By addressing the causes of inequality and teaching respect and empathy from an early age, society can move toward a future where every woman's life is valued and protected.

Key Players

- South Africa:

South Africa has one of the highest rates of women being killed by their partners in the world. Many women face abuse at home, and sometimes the police won't act fast to address this issue due to weak law enforcement. Because of this, the government, researchers, and the United Nations are studying how to stop these killings from happening.

- Afghanistan:

After the Taliban took control again, women lost many of their rights, like going to school or working freely. Violence against women has grown, and many killings go unpunished. The world includes Afghanistan in femicide studies to understand how lack of women's rights increases danger.

- Central African Republic:

This country has faced various years of war between armed groups. In these conflicts, women are often attacked and even killed. Studying femicide in the Central African Republic helps show how war and conflict make women vulnerable.

- Jamaica:

Jamaica has a high level of crime and gang violence. Many women are killed by boyfriends, husbands, and even gang members. Researchers look at Jamaica to learn how crime, poverty, and gender violence are connected.

- Pakistan:

In some parts of Pakistan, women are killed in so-called “honour” killings when families believe a woman has brought shame on them. These acts come from old traditions that treat women unfairly. Pakistan is studied to understand how culture and gender roles can lead to femicide.

UN Actions

The United Nations has taken many significant measures that address femicide since it's a serious issue that happens globally and that affects many women's lives. The UN has been working hard to prevent it through research, new laws, and international programs that have shown great progress in promoting gender equality and the recognition of women's rights.

One thing that has led to a major shift in the decreasing number of women killings is that the UN established a global system to track cases of femicide. With the help of its agencies, UN Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN created a global network that assists countries in gathering and comparing data on femicide. This system enables governments to ensure the data collection of frequency on femicide incidents and figure out how to respond effectively. In 2025, the UN started testing this system in Fiji and has already tested a similar initiative in Honduras. This network is a great resource on combating femicides since having reliable data is a crucial step in the fight to stop femicide.

The UN Women published the first South African National Gender based violence study in 2022, which gives detailed information on violence, whether it be physical, sexual, emotional, or economic. This study helped track progress and have a clear picture of femicide in South Africa. Furthermore, UN Women has a project called “Strengthening Institutional Responses to Violence Against Girls and Women,” which aims to improve institutions to respond better to femicide and gender based violence to make perpetrators more accountable. There is also the Maputo Protocol, which is a protocol on the rights of women in Africa. It demands criminalization of violence, early marriage bans, gender equality, and reproductive rights. It is one of the strongest treaties that South Africa signed in 2004.

Current status

Today, femicide is a major problem around the world. The United Nations reports that about 89,000 women and girls were killed in 2022, and many of them were murdered by partners or family members. This means that almost one woman is killed every 10 minutes because of gender-based violence. This situation is especially serious in Latin America and the Caribbean, where over 4,000 women were victims of femicide in 2022. Many of these crimes are caused by gender inequality and weak justice systems. In some countries, killers are rarely punished, which allows the violence to continue.

An average of 66,000 women are murdered globally each year. The reasons behind femicide can vary, from bigotry and male entitlement to gender stereotypes, among many others. In many cases, femicide happens within the context of domestic violence, often committed by partners or family members, and it may involve forced abortions and other forms of threat. Femicide often takes place within women's own homes. According to the UN, 140 females are killed every day by someone within their own family, and it is estimated that 60% of female deaths occur at home. Ultimately, femicide serves as a painful reminder that many women are not safe even in their own homes and that ending this violence requires both global attention and meaningful change.

The COVID-19 pandemic made things worse by trapping many women at home with their abusers and limiting access to help. Other issues, like poverty and access to weapons, also make women more vulnerable. The United Nations is now focusing on collecting better data and helping countries create stronger laws to prevent femicide. While some progress has been made, the problem continues to affect thousands of families and communities each year. Stopping femicide will require more action, stronger protection, and fair treatment for women everywhere.

South Africa continues to have one of the highest rates of femicide globally. 5,578 women were killed by the end of March of 2024, meaning an average of 15 women killed per day. 60% of cases involve intimate partners, and in 44% the perpetrator is not identified. In some provinces the risk is higher, it is almost double the national average. They continue to be fueled by social insecurity and social norms, however, in recent years there have been movements demanding that femicide be declared a national disaster. In 2025, the South African government launched a 90 day blitz to intensify their response of femicide, and different policies are being implemented.

Guiding Questions

- What are the main causes of femicide around the world?
- How can stronger laws and better police work help reduce femicide?
- How can communities and families help protect women and prevent femicide before it happens?
- How can the media help raise awareness about femicide and women's rights?
- How can we implement policies in South Africa
- How can we ensure that femicide is treated with importance in South Africa when their cultural values often make it difficult to?

Quorum

1. South Sudan

2. South Africa
3. México
4. United states
5. Canada
6. China
7. South Korea
8. North Korea
9. Italy
10. France
11. Argentina
12. United Kingdom
13. Brazil
14. Australia
15. Germany
16. Belgium
17. Morocco
18. Afganistan
19. El Salvador
20. Spain

Bibliography

A brief history of the Commission on the Status of Women. (s. f.). UN Women – Headquarters.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/brief-history>

Five essential facts to know about femicide | UN Women – Headquarters. (2024, 25 noviembre). UN

Women

–

Headquarters.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/five-essential-facts-to-know-about-femicide>

Wikipedia contributors. (2025, 4 octubre). *Femicide*. Wikipedia.

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Femicide>

United Nations. (s. f.). *Everything you need to know about CSW | Naciones Unidas.*

<https://www.un.org/es/node/227992>

Femicide Rates by Country 2025. (s. f.). World Population Review.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/femicide-rates-by-country>

Observer Diplomat Observer Diplomat Magazine. (2024, 30 noviembre). Six Countries Refer

Afghanistan Women's Rights Violations to ICC at Geneva Accountability Conference.

Observer Diplomat - International Affairs & Diplomatic Magazine.

<https://observerdiplomat.com/six-countries-refer-afghanistan-womens-rights-violations-to-icc-at-geneva-accountability-conference/>

Afghanistan's Taliban Face New International Pressure on Rights of Women and Girls. (s. f.). Open

Society

Justice

Initiative.

<https://www.justiceinitiative.org/newsroom/afghanistan-s-taliban-face-new-international-pressure-on-rights-of-women-and-girls>

Navigating Influence in Afghanistan: the Cases of Qatar and Pakistan. (s. f.). The Washington Institute.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/navigating-influence-afghanistan-cases-qatar-and-pakistan>