

Report of the Israel Observatory on Femicide for 2023

Selected Highlights

- In 2023, 22 women were murdered because of their gender
- The rate of femicide among Israeli Arab women decreased in relation to Jewish women
- Nearly all the suspects/murderers were partners/ family members of the victim
- For the first time, a lesbian of Druze origin was murdered
- More than half the femicides were perpetrated by stabbing and only 18% by gunshot
- In only 3 cases did the victim complain to the police previously about domestic violence
- A third of all the femicide cases took place after the outbreak of the current war
- The rate of the murder of women in Israel rose exponentially on 7 October

The Israel Observatory on Femicide (IOF), which was established in November 2020 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, aims to be Israel's most reliable source of data, providing quantitative and qualitative findings on femicide, namely, the murder of women because of their gender. It endeavours to analyse the data in an objective manner, devoid of political or other interests. This report, written in English, Hebrew and Arabic, documents femicide cases from the beginning until the end of the year.

Methodology: The data gathered by the IOF comes from local and national media and internet reports, Google alerts and interviews, which are crosschecked with other databases, including police statistics. In some cases, only partial information is available; in other cases, the identity of the murderer is still unknown.

Femicide in Israel in 2023: In 2023, there were 22 cases of femicide, namely 1.83 femicides each month, out of a total of over 30 women who were murdered during the year. All the perpetrators were male. This number represents a small decrease (8.3%) in the number of femicides perpetrated in Israel compared with 2022. This statistic may contradict reports in the media of an increase in the frequency of the phenomenon this year. The gap between the report of the IOF and other reports is the result of two interacting variables: an increase in awareness of the phenomenon in general, and a recent growing interest by multiple organisations in femicide. Sometimes the murder of women reported in the media does not constitute femicide, when she is killed by accident, or because of a criminal act, and not on account of her gender.

It is pointed out that a third of all femicide cases in 2023 occurred after the outbreak of the current war.

Ethnicity: Half (50%) of all femicide victims were Jewish, two victims (9%) were foreign nationals, and 41% were Israeli Arabs (including one Druze woman, 5 Bedouin women and 3 Muslim women). According to the Abraham Initiatives, in 2023, 244 people –including 16 women- were murdered in the Arab sector. While this number is double the number of Arab citizens killed in 2022, the relative number of Arab women murdered decreased. Similarly, the rate of femicide among Arab women decreased relative to Jewish women. Nevertheless, the rate of femicide among Israeli Arab women is disproportionate to their percentage (21.1%) in the total population in Israel.

Relation of Victim and Perpetrator: In 19 of the 22 cases (86%), the victim knew the murderer/suspect, and in most cases (95%), the victim and the perpetrator were of the same ethnicity. In 12 cases (59%) in

which the identity of the murderer was known, the main suspect was the victim's past or current partner. In four cases, the main suspects are the victim's brothers, and in two cases, a son killed his mother (matricide). In sum, all the women were murdered either by their partners or family members, or at their instigation, except one neighbour who had harassed the victim in the past.

Motive: In nearly all the cases, the femicides in the Arab sector were attributed to the life style of the victim, who was perceived as harming the family honour. In an unprecedented case, a woman from the Druze community was killed because she was lesbian. In six cases, the victim was murdered by her partner during a fight, and in four of these cases, family members and friends had known of previous violent attacks on her by the perpetrator. In three cases, the murderer claimed to be in a psychotic state at the time of the murder, and two of these men had been previously hospitalized in a psychiatric wing. In three cases, the murder was perpetrated under the influence of alcohol. Five femicide cases, of which three are of Israeli Arab women, have not yet been solved by the Israeli Police.

Age: The average age of the victim was 38.1. The youngest victim was 18, and the oldest 76. The average age of the suspect/murderer is 35.8; the youngest is 14 and the oldest is 86.

Weapon: Over half the victims (54%) were stabbed to death, while women (18%) were shot by gunfire. The rest of the cases included tying the victim down in a car and burning her, pushing her down the stairs, hitting her with a sharp instrument, and strangulation.

Recourse to authorities: In only three cases did the victim complain to the police about domestic violence prior to her murder. In two cases, the murderer had a criminal record, and in one case the police had received a complaint from an ex-partner, but not from the victim herself. In nine other cases (41%), neighbours and family members knew of previous violence by the murderer against the victim, but this was not reported to the authorities.

Presence of Family Member: In four cases, at least one child of the victim witnessed the murder. In another case, her partner was present, and in a third case, a neighbour witnessed the event. In two femicide cases, three children were also killed, and one child stabbed. Two victims were murdered and their foetus did not survive (foeticide).

Suicide: In two cases, the murderer attempted suicide.

The Murder and Femicide of Women in Events of 7 October 2023:

The rate of women's murders rose exponentially in 2023 due to the unprecedented events on 7 October 2023. Already in the first week of the war, the IOF published a statement on its [website](#) condemning the Hamas aggression, and sent an [op-ed](#) to 300 NGOs in Israel and abroad, requesting them to condemn the barbaric atrocities against women and girls.

While the IOF does not usually include murder of women as a result of terrorist acts, some of the killings which took place on 7 October can be considered to be femicides, in that women were targeted as women, and underwent sexual violence prior to their murder. The Hamas terrorists, who infiltrated the Israeli settlements near the Gaza Strip, had manuals with instructions how to rape women before killing them: many women were sexually assaulted, their intimate parts were dissected, and they suffered other atrocities, like mothers being forced to see their children beheaded. According to [ynet from 31 December 2023](#), which is based upon civilian reporting, approximately 300 women were murdered in the Gaza strip settlements in Israel. It should be pointed out that hundreds of men were also murdered, and some raped. The data on the 7 October were not collected by the IOF, and the ability of the security forces and emergency services to collect reliable evidence about the atrocities is limited due to defacement of the victims after rape, including the conflagration of bodies.

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