



# The Alarming Escalation of Femicide

*A Domestic Context Analysis*

Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Kirkuk

**Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO)**

April 2026

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# 1. Executive Summary

The Peace and Freedom Organization (PFO) issues this comprehensive report with profound concern regarding the unprecedented and alarming surge in femicide and gender-based violence across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Kirkuk. Our systematic field monitoring and rigorous data collection indicate that these fatalities—totaling 29 cases by mid-April 2026—are not merely isolated criminal incidents. Rather, they represent a deep-seated, systemic crisis rooted in structural inequality, legal loopholes, and the persistence of harmful traditional norms that demand immediate, robust, and effective institutional intervention.

The deteriorating safety environment is characterized by an escalating frequency of violence, where April alone witnessed 9 documented fatalities in just fifteen days. This trajectory suggests a critical breakdown in preventative safety mechanisms and a failure of the current protective frameworks to shield vulnerable women from domestic and social duress. To address this urgent humanitarian and human rights challenge, PFO advocates for a multi-dimensional strategic response.

First, we demand the strict and non-discriminatory judicial enforcement of Law No. 8 (2011), ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable without political or tribal interference. Second, we emphasize the necessity of decoupling the justice system from tribal mediation (Sulh), which often mitigates sentences and encourages recidivism through a climate of impunity. Furthermore, PFO calls for institutional transparency, including the rescinding of media restrictions that impede responsible reporting on gender-based crimes. Finally, we recommend the urgent strengthening of protection infrastructures, including specialized shelters and emergency hotlines. Without a decisive, unified stance to uphold the rule of law and protect the dignity of women, the safety of the entire social fabric remains at risk.

## 2. Introduction and Methodology

This report examines the evolving impacts of the alarming escalation in femicide and gender-based violence across the Kurdistan Region and Kirkuk. Moving beyond immediate crime documentation, it analyzes how systemic gaps and shifting social dynamics are reshaping the safety landscape for women.

The analysis is based on a triangulated approach, drawing primary insights from PFO's field sources, including local observers, civil society actors, and women's rights activists. These are complemented by continuous monitoring of official government statements, specifically from the High Council of Women, and verified reports from international and local media outlets. This methodology ensures a contextualized, evidence-based understanding of the structural dynamics shaping the current domestic crisis, while providing updated insights that build upon PFO's previous monitoring efforts.

## 3. Quantitative Data Analysis

### January 2026 to April 15, 2026

Our systematic documentation reveals a perilous upward trajectory in the mortality rates of women due to violence, signaling a deepening protection crisis:

#### Aggregate

#### Fatalities

From January 1, 2026, to April 15, 2026, a total of 29 women have lost their lives across the Kurdistan Region and Kirkuk. This sharp increase within a short timeframe reflects a critical breakdown in preventative safety mechanisms.

### Temporal Distribution (Monthly Breakdown)

- January & February: 13 documented fatalities.
- March: 7 documented fatalities.
- April (until April 15th): 9 documented fatalities.

Note: This includes a high concentration of incidents in the first two weeks of April, occurring across Erbil (Khbat, Soran, Qushtapa), Sulaymaniyah (Said Sadiq, Rania, Raparin), and Kirkuk.

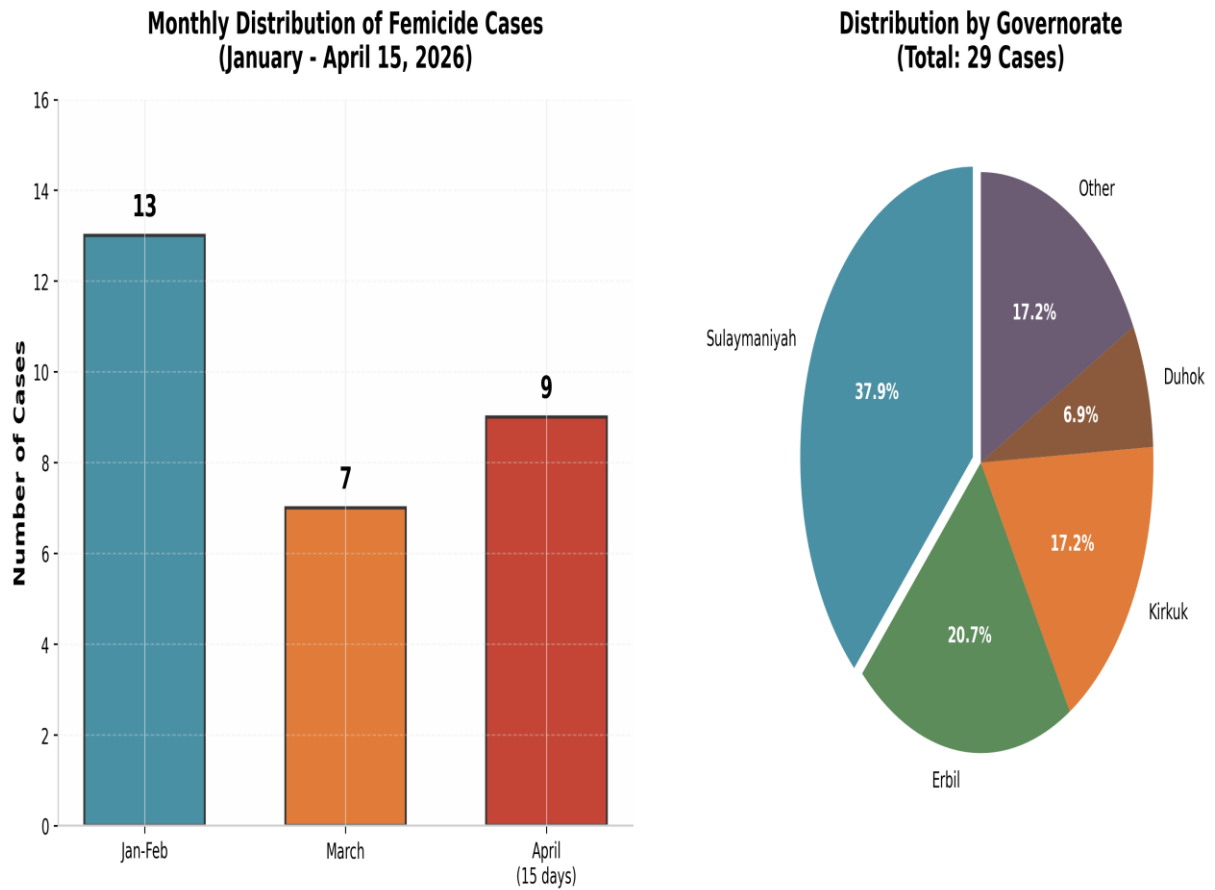


Figure 1: Monthly Distribution and Geographic Breakdown of Femicide Cases

## Qualitative Field Evidence: Visual Documentation

(Note: These summaries are prepared for inclusion with the corresponding photographic evidence)

- Exhibit A: The Women's Cemetery** This image documents a specialized burial ground reserved for women whose families have either disowned them or refused to claim their remains following violent deaths. It serves as a stark symbol of the "social death" that often precedes or follows femicide in traditional settings.

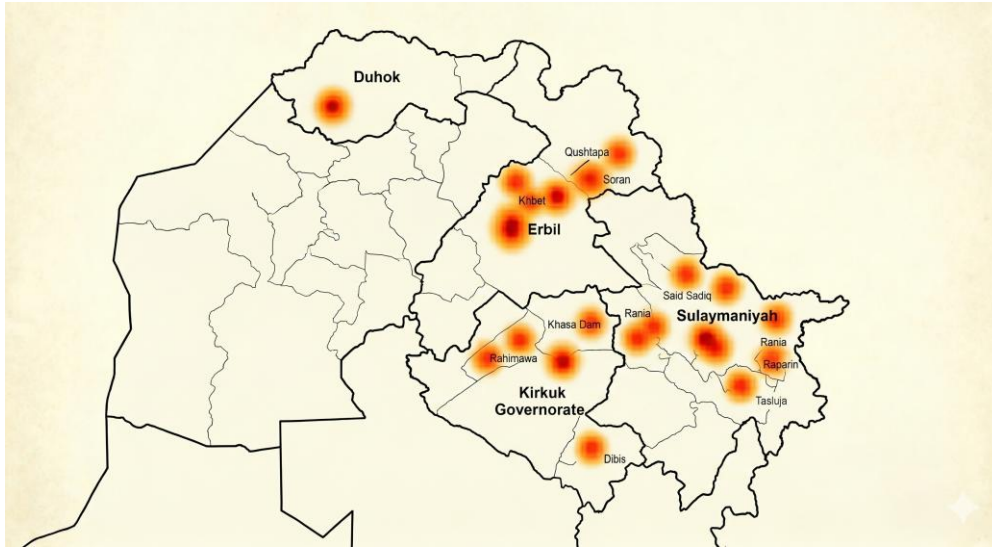


- **Exhibit B: The Case of the Khasa Dam (Kirkuk)** This visual evidence corresponds to the recovery of a female body on January 4, 2026, at the Khasa Dam. The victim was found wrapped in a blanket and weighted down with concrete blocks to ensure submersion. This case exemplifies the extreme brutality and premeditation involved in these crimes.



## 4. Geographic Distribution

The following map illustrates the geographic distribution of femicide cases across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Kirkuk. The concentration of incidents highlights areas requiring immediate attention and enhanced protection measures.



### Key Geographic Insights

- Sulaymaniyah Governorate recorded the highest number of cases (11), representing 37.9% of all documented fatalities.
- Erbil Governorate reported 6 cases, with incidents concentrated in Khbat and Soran districts.
- Kirkuk recorded 5 cases, including particularly brutal incidents at the Khasa Dam.
- Duhok Governorate had 2 documented cases, both in rural districts.

## 5. Detailed Documentation of Monitored Cases

The following cases represent verified incidents of violence against women, categorized by month, illustrating the systemic risks and patterns of femicide in the region.

## I. April 2026: Escalation in Violence

Date	Location	Incident Description	Source
April 14	Kirkuk - Lailan Road	Body of unidentified woman discovered with multiple gunshot wounds	<a href="https://www.non14.net/185156">https://www.non14.net/185156</a>
April 12	Duhok - Rural District	Young woman fatally assaulted by her brother under "honor" pretext	Field Report
April 11	Sulaymaniyah - Rania	Woman died after ingesting toxic substances; history of domestic duress	Field Report
April 10	Erbil - Soran	30-year-old woman succumbed to severe burns (self-immolation)	Field Report
April 7	Sulaymaniyah - Raparin	Woman found dead with physical trauma; husband detained	Field Report
April 5	Kirkuk - Dibis	Woman fatally stabbed during domestic dispute	Field Report
April 2	Erbil - Khat	Woman's body recovered from Greater Zab River	Field Report
April 2	Sulaymaniyah - Said Sadiq	Violent dispute resulted in woman's death, 3 injured	Field Report
April 2	Shorish Sub-district	35-year-old mother (R.J.) shot by her two brothers	Field Report

## II. March 2026

Date	Location	Incident Description	Source
March 30	Koya City	Woman (S.H.) died from severe burns after hospitalization	Field Report
March 26	Said Sadiq District	16-year-old girl died from self-inflicted gunshot	Field Report
March 18	Kirkuk - Rahimawa	Woman (D.S.A.) died after self-immolation in public street	Field Report
March 15	Kirkuk - Khasa Dam	Mutilated body of unidentified woman (20-22) discovered	Field Report
March 15	Said Sadiq District	15-year-old girl (R.M.) died from gunshot by father	Field Report

Date	Location	Incident Description	Source
March 6	Akre	22-year-old pregnant woman (M.A.) strangled by husband	<a href="https://newjin.net/31927">https://newjin.net/31927</a>

### III. February 2026

Date	Location	Incident Description	Source
Feb 26	Old Bridge	Woman died after falling into river during taxi altercation	<a href="https://newjin.net/31916">https://newjin.net/31916</a>
Feb 14	Khbat - Greater Zab	Woman's body (30-35) found with hands and mouth bound	Field Report
Feb 13	Said Sadiq - Barkew	Woman's body discovered inside home two days after death	Field Report
Feb 12	Sulaymaniyah - Guli Shahr	38-year-old woman pursued and fatally shot three times	Field Report
Feb 10	Kifri - Tel Naqar	Woman beheaded by husband; perpetrator recorded the act	Field Report
Feb 3	Said Sadiq - Tasluja	18-year-old woman killed by 13-year-old brother	Field Report
Feb 3	Derbendikhan	35-year-old woman died after jumping into Sirwan River	Field Report
Feb 1	Sharazor District	30-year-old pregnant woman died from elevator fall	Field Report

### IV. January 2026

Date	Location	Incident Description	Source
Jan 4	Kirkuk - Khasa Dam	Woman's body recovered wrapped in blanket, weighted with concrete block	<a href="https://shafaq.com/ar/-/امن/تفاصيل-جثة-سد-الخاصة-في-كركوك">https://shafaq.com/ar/-/امن/تفاصيل-جثة-سد-الخاصة-في-كركوك</a>

## 6. Legal Framework and Compliance Status

The current wave of violence against women constitutes a direct violation of both domestic legislation and international human rights obligations. These acts contravene the Iraqi Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal security, as well as the Iraqi Penal Code (Article 405) and Law No. 8 of 2011 (Act to Combat Domestic Violence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq).

Furthermore, as part of the Iraqi state, the Kurdistan Region is bound by international instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), all of which mandate the protection of women's rights and security.

### Domestic Legislation

- Iraqi Constitution: Guarantees the right to life and personal security
- Iraqi Penal Code (Article 405): Addresses violence and homicide
- Law No. 8 of 2011: Act to Combat Domestic Violence in the KRI

### International Instruments

- CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- UDHR - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Alongside these legal obligations, the Kurdistan Regional Government has undertaken important steps to address violence against women, including the adoption of relevant legal frameworks and the establishment of specialized institutional mechanisms to combat gender-based violence. In this context, [Khanzad Ahmad](#) serves as the Chairperson of the High Council of Women under the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and has consistently emphasized the importance of protecting women's rights and advancing gender equality, demonstrating a clear commitment to strengthening the role of women in society.

However, despite these efforts, significant challenges remain in the effective implementation of laws and in ensuring consistent accountability. Persistent gaps in enforcement, alongside instances of interference and reliance on non-judicial mechanisms, continue to undermine access to justice for victims. Furthermore, restrictions imposed by government institutions on the publication of official data and statistics have led to many of these crimes going unreported and unnoticed by the public. This lack of transparency not only obscures the scale of the problem but also undermines accountability and effective response efforts.

## 7. Structural Obstacles to Justice

Expert analysis and activist testimonies identify several factors exacerbating the crisis:

### **Tribal Arbitration vs. Rule of Law**

The elevation of "Tribal Reconciliation" (Sulh) over judicial proceedings frequently allows perpetrators to evade justice, particularly when they are affiliated with influential tribes or political factions.

### **The Paradigm of Impunity**

Political interference and the shielding of criminals by partisan actors lead to a "contagion effect," encouraging further violence.

### **Systemic Information Blackout**

Official directives issued on September 18, 2025, have restricted media coverage and prohibited the publication of crime statistics. Activists warn that this policy causes femicides to pass in silence, stripped of public scrutiny.

## 8. Strategic Recommendations

To arrest this cycle of violence, the PFO advocates for the following measures:

0. **Strict Judicial Enforcement:** Rigorous application of Law No. 8 (2011) without discriminatory exceptions.
1. **Decoupling Justice from Tribalism:** Prohibiting tribal settlements from influencing or mitigating sentences in cases of violence against women.
2. **Institutional Transparency:** Rescinding directives that impede responsible media reporting on gender-based crimes.
3. **Enhanced Protection Mechanisms:** Strengthening and funding shelters, emergency hotlines, and specialized security protocols for women at risk.

## 9. Conclusion

Femicide in the Kurdistan Region is not an incidental occurrence; it is a systematic violation of fundamental human rights. Without immediate and collective action, the safety and dignity of women will continue to erode.

The Peace and Freedom Organization calls for a decisive, unified stance to protect the lives and dignity of all women in the region. We urge all stakeholders—government institutions, civil society organizations, international partners, and community leaders—to work together to end this crisis and ensure that every woman can live free from violence and fear.

### Our

### Commitment

PFO remains committed to monitoring, documenting, and advocating for an end to gender-based violence in the Kurdistan Region. We will continue to work tirelessly until every woman is safe, protected, and empowered to live with dignity.



# Peace and Freedom Organization

(PFO)

Advocating for Human Rights and Gender Equality

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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