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Open letter and statement on Janet Love released by constitutional lawyers, legal academics, human rights and social justice activists.

By *moderator*
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As constitutional lawyers, legal academics, human rights and social justice activists who have worked with Janet Love while she has been the National Director of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), we are surprised and dismayed by Premier Helen Zille?s implication that she will not act independently of narrow party politics in her capacity as a human rights commissioner. Under the leadership of Janet Love, the LRC has fought fearlessly for the rights of the poor and powerless, without favour to the ANC or any other political party.

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As constitutional lawyers, legal academics, human rights and social justice activists who have worked with Janet Love while she has been the National Director of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), we are surprised and dismayed by Premier Helen Zille?s implication that she will not act independently of narrow party politics in her capacity as a human rights commissioner.

During the last five years, Janet Love has been the National Director of the LRC. In the face of a gradual decrease of grant funding for human rights work, she has fought to secure its survival. Despite competition from the private sector and the LRC?s inability to pay competitive salaries, she has succeeded in attracting talented lawyers to continue the LRC?s long tradition of human rights litigation and advocacy.

Under the leadership of Janet Love, the LRC has fought fearlessly for the rights of the poor and powerless, without favour to the ANC or any other political party. During this period, the LRC has for example undertaken the following litigation and advocacy:
? The Nyathi case, in which the National Government was challenged for its failure to satisfy court orders made against it, prompting censure from the Constitutional Court;
? Numerous successful challenges to the maladministration of the social grants system, particularly in the Eastern Cape;
? The successful challenge to the constitutionality of the Community Land Rights Act;
? Advocating against the Traditional Courts Bill;
? Opposing the threatened eviction of the residents of Joe Slovo settlement in Cape Town;
? Representing Paul Verryn and the Methodist Church refugees in the face of unrelenting pressure from the City of Johannesburg authorities and the South African Police Services;
? Challenging the government?s policies in relation to the provision of free basic water;
? Representing Earthlife Africa in its fight to ensure that the PBMR project complied with basic administrative and environmental law principles;

? Challenging the 'political pardons' process being undertaken by the President; and
? Challenging the prosecutions policy of the National Prosecuting Authority on the basis that it unconstitutionally undermined the independence of the NPA from the National Executive.

That record speaks for itself. It shows that Janet Love has not hesitated to promote human rights by litigating against and criticising government at all levels, whichever party is in power.

We are therefore concerned that Ms Zille has criticised the SA Human Rights Commission in a manner which does a grave injustice to someone who has repeatedly demonstrated her commitment to human rights in South Africa. In the process, she has also undermined the LRC, which is one of South Africa's oldest and most widely respected human rights organisations.

Signatories
1. Adv Geoff Budlender SC
2. Adv Richard Moultrie
3. Fatima Hassan
4. Zackie Achmat
5. Gavin Silber
6. Adv Wim Trengove SC
7. Andrew Feinstein
8. Professor Halton Cheadle
9. Bishop Paul Verryn
10. Gerald Kraak
11. Professor Jonathan Klaaren
12. Professor Hugh Corder
13. Professor Pierre de Vos
14. Adv Nasreen Rajab-Budlender
15. Asha Ramgobin
16. Jacob van Garderen
17. Adv Steven Budlender
18. Adv Stuart Wilson
19. Dr Jackie Dugard
20. Judge Kathie Satchwell
21. Dr Rachel Wynberg
22. Doron Isaacs
23. Nathan Geffen
24. Audrey Elster
25. Lindiwe Tukani
26. Judith February
27. Professor Richard Calland
28. Zubeida Jaffer
29. Rose Williams
30. Reynaud Daniels
31. Ashraf Mahomed
32. Advocate Adila Hassim

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