



PRESS RELEASE
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NDIFUNA UKWAZI DENOUNCES CITY OF CAPE TOWN'S APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

Ndifuna Ukwazi strongly denounces the City of Cape Town's (the City) efforts to [solicit complaints](#) from members of the public against people struggling with homelessness. In what it has called a "citizen's campaign", the City has called on "rate-payers, residents and business owners" to express concerns relating to "the impact of homeless persons" on them. This solicitation of complaints is tantamount to inciting hatred against those experiencing homelessness and will only exacerbate their vulnerability and marginalisation.

The City's calls for complaints against homeless people comes in the wake of eleven people experiencing homelessness [launching applications](#) in both the Western Cape High Court and the Equality Court challenging the constitutionality and discriminatory impact of two of the City of Cape Town's municipal by-laws, namely the [By-law relating to Streets, Public Places and the Prevention of Noise Nuisances](#) (2007) and the [Integrated Waste Management By-law](#) (2009). These by-laws [criminalise homelessness](#) by making it a crime for persons living on the street to conduct ordinary life-sustaining activities, like sleeping, camping, resting, bathing, erecting a shelter, keeping personal belongings in public, or even lying down, sitting or simply standing in a public place. The by-laws .

In response to a legal challenge brought by homeless people represented by the Ndifuna Ukwazi Law Centre, the City has prioritised the opinions of businesses and members of the public who do have homes to solicit complaints over the lived realities of homeless people in a way that fuels the deep-seated stigma against those living on the streets and drum up animosity and "othering" between those who have and those who do not.

The criminalisation of homelessness is a cruel, inhumane and unsustainable response to addressing the challenges faced by those living on the streets. The City's divisive approach and call for support from "the public" misses this point and takes us further away from a solution - treating those struggling with homelessness like criminals doesn't address the root causes of homelessness, such as poverty, inadequate affordable housing, a lack of state assistance, mental health issues, substance-abuse, and discrimination. The City's emphasis on law enforcement and punitive measures to deal with homelessness is also [expensive and diverts money away](#) from implementing more effective solutions.

- For more, read "Eleven people who are homeless go to court to challenge Cape Town's discriminatory by-laws", Ndifuna Ukwazi Press Release (7 April 2021): <https://jumpshare.com/v/E9FaboaGpsqIZN4gvHT8>

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