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# **Durkan praises 'valuable' O'Loan**



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Foyle MP Mark Durkan says former Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan had the toughest job in the North.

Mrs O'Loan stepped down as Police Ombudsman on Monday after six years in the job.

The SDLP leader said Mrs O'Loan carried out her job with "distinction and valour."

"The work of the Police Ombudsman is required by law to be strictly evidence-based, but there was no such obligation on her critics. Nuala O'Loan was required to be fair and balanced – her critics were neither. Nuala O'Loan did very precisely what she was hired to do. She pointed out shortcomings in policing practice but also affirmed police conduct in other instances. She did so absolutely without fear or political favour, even when her findings made uncomfortable reading for the governments which had appointed her. In particular, she championed the rights of victims who had no other recourse, no other path to justice," he said.

Mr Durkan said Mrs O'Loan faced difficult conditions in her role but praised the way she dealt with attacks. "Her critics were not fit to play the ball so they played the woman. The attacks on her were politically motivated and personally vindictive, but they never had substance.

Confidence rising

"Even when the orchestrated campaigns against her were at their most vicious, public confidence in the Ombudsman's Office was rising steadily to heights which no similar institution could even hope for. Ordinary, fair-minded people knew the value of her and her work, and so do fair-minded police officers," he said.

Mr Durkan also predicted that Mrs O'Loan's experience as the Police Ombudsman will lead to other positions. "Nuala O'Loan has set a new international benchmark in public service, and her skills and experience will be in high demand around the world," he added.

Mrs O'Loan's successor as Police Ombudsman is the former assistant commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Al Hutchinson. He also served as the Police Oversight Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

The full article contains 331 words and appears in n/a newspaper.

Last Updated: 07 November 2007 10:09 AM

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