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 **THE COALITION POD LUPOM“ – PRESS RELEASE**

**Election Irregularities Already Indicate That Election Will Not Be Free Or Fair**

*At today’s press conference in Banja Luka, the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections “Pod Lupom”, which monitors the pre-election period in BiH, presented the findings of the long-term observation for the first three weeks of reporting (from July 23 to August 13) and expressed concerns about the number of observed electoral irregularities.*

According to the findings of Coalition’s long-term observers, many electoral irregularities and violations of the Electoral Law of BiH continue in the third week of reporting. 135 cases of premature and prohibited campaign and paid advertising were registered in every third municipality in BiH. This points to a mass phenomenon and an increased number of the violations of the Election Law compared to the 2014 General elections and 2016 Local elections in BiH. 18 different political subjects engaged in premature paid campaign. There is also misuse of public resources such as intensifying public works and recruitment in the public sector.

‘’The law is explicit in a sense that any form of paid political advertising is prohibited whereas regular activities of political parties are allowed. Intensive public meetings during August are certainly not the regular activities of political subjects”, said Jelena Tanasković Mićanović, Public Policy Coordinator of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

There is suspicion that voters’ registers are not up-to-date in three municipalities: Ključ, Bosanska Krupa and Ravno. The Voters’ Register Center in Kljuc is closed and the responsibility was assumed by the Municipal Election Commission Kljuc. It is suspected that the Voters’ register in Ravno Municipality contains a number of deceased persons and the Voters’ Register Center claims that many people moved away and that they do not have the information about the deceased.

All local election commissions operate in fully capacity. However, even in full capacity 10 local election commissions failed to comply with the provisions of the Election law of BiH concerning gender equality; 14 of them have inadequate working conditions such as, as claimed by them, inadequate work premises, equipment in poor condition and lack of financial funds.

‘’This is progress compared to the first two weeks of reporting; however, it can still affect the high-quality implementation of the elections, that is why we call on the local administration to secure adequate working conditions for local election commissions in these municipalities”, said Biljana Trninić, Regional Coordinator of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

In addition to observing the work and sessions of local election committees, they also monitor the activities anticipated in the election calendar and compliance with deadlines. It was observed that four (4) local election commissions failed to send out invitation to political subjects for the draw of members of the election commissions by August 8, and 21 local election commission failed to assign positions within polling station committees to political subjects, thereby violating the deadline anticipated for this activity. Yet, some of them claim that they received the CEC’s approval to prolong the draw.

There were cases of pressure on voters and vote buying, offers of money, gifts and other favors in exchange for a vote. Illegal trade of posts within election committees is suspected in five municipalities, which the Coalition will further investigate.

‘’Unfortunately, the electoral irregularities registered by long-term observes in the first three weeks of reporting indicate that we will not have free and fair elections in the real sense of the words this year either”– said Dario Jovanovic, director of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

We believe that the modification adopted by the Central Election Commission, as recommended by the Coalition, to disclose names of all members of the polling station committees with information about affiliation to the political subject after being appointed to the polling station committee and Election Day will prevent swaps and potential illicit trades of places within polling station committees, which, even if they occur, will be visible. The Coalition will publish an online database with the names of all appointed members of the polling station committees with information about affiliation to the political subjects and options to search the database by name, surname, political subject, polling station committee, municipality or town.

We remind citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the opportunity to apply to observe Election Day by calling the toll-free number 080 05 05 05 or by visiting our web page [www.podlupom.org](http://www.podlupom.org) as well as to report electoral irregularities.

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 The Coalition

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