TO THE PRESS Bijeljina, September 20, 2018

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

 **Political Subjects in BiH Do As They Wish, the Law Does Not Apply to Them**

*At today's press conference in Bijeljina, the Coalition Pod Lupom, which implements non-partisan observation of elections in BiH, presented the findings of the long-term observation of the 2018 General Elections in BiH for the first eight weeks of reporting and the Report on the progress of the election campaign to date.*

Coalition’s long-term observers that have been in the field since July 15 registered a record high number of electoral irregularities by September 17. Lately, there has been a high number of cases involving misuse of personal data, most frequently for the purpose of voting by mail. The Coalition calls on all BiH citizens, regardless of whether they have residence in BiH or in some other country to visit the CEC's web page and check where they are registered to vote on the following link <https://bit.ly/2rEodRf>.The CEC has been conversant with these cases and will forward them to the competent Prosecutor’s Office since the activity is a criminal act.

''We welcome yesterday's decision by the Central Election Commission to disclose names of the voters registered for voting by mail, with protection of personal data. Unfortunately, the information will not be consolidated and publicly disclosed in electronic form; they will be posted on notice boards at the local voters’ register centers“, said Jelena Tanasković Mićanović, Public Policy Coordinator of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

Observers documented 33 cases involving misuse of public resources for the purpose of the campaign. Salaries in the public sector in Republika Srpska and pensions increased; pensioners received one-time assistance, and tax base for calculation of salaries was reduced, which means that all workers in RS received a salary increase by around 30 KM compared to the average salary. Misuse of public resources in public companies “Hidroelektrane na Trebišnjic” and “Putevi RS”, recruitment of interns to public companies along political and partisan lines; public events in schools. There have been cases of recruitment of staff at the state level and in some cantons in FBiH, as well as ceremonies for incomplete infrastructural projects.

The number of cases involving pressure on voters both in public and private companies grows with the approach of Election Day. Offers of money and other services for a vote, threats of workplace firing, gifts and promises of employment after elections have become everyday routine of BiH citizens. Unlawful pressure on employees of Nova Banka, Water Company, Clinical Center and Correctional Facility in Banja Luka, on employees of private company owned by a candidate in Gradiska, on employees of public institutions on Banovici and Srebrenik and offers of money for a vote in Breza, Domaljevac-Šamac, Goražde, Istočna Ilidža, Foča FBIH, Stari Grad Sarajevo, Višegrad and Zvornik.

''We wish to encourage citizens to report such cases and we call on the competent institutions to do their job, to protect citizens and allow them to be able to express their will freely and without any pressure on Election Day“, was said in the Coalition’s statement.

Illicit trade of posts within the polling station committee has been suspected in 30 municipalities. Changes in membership of the polling station committees occurred in 85 municipalities, and names of members of the polling station committees including the information on affiliation to political subjects were not publicly disclosed in 26 municipalities, even though it was the obligation of local election commissions.

By September 7, which is when the election campaign officially starts, 436 cases of sponsored political advertising were registered during the time when it is prohibited by law. It is three times more compared to the 2016 Local elections. Five (5) political subjects that most frequently violated the law in this segment are: Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) in 66 cases, Party for Democratic Action (SDA) in 53 cases, Democratic Peoples Alliance (DNS) in 36 cases, Alliance for Better Future (SBB) in 33 cases and Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in 32 cases.

Suspicions that voters’ registers are not up-to-date were raised in 14 municipalities due to the failure to remove deceased persons or people who renounced BiH citizenship. Suspicion concerning the voters’ register were raised in Banovići, Banja Luka, Bosanska Krupa, Čapljina, Domaljevac-Šamac, Donji Žabar, Ilijaš, Kalesija, Ključ, Odžak, Pelagićevo, Ravno, Sapna and Vitez.

As of September 7, the Coalition “Pod lupom” has additional 42 observers in the field to report on the course of the election campaign. According to the findings, by September 17, the observers registered 17 cases involving candidates’ arrival to pre-election events in official vehicles or under the escort of security officers. Leaders in a number of documented cases of misuse of official vehicles and security personnel are Alliance for Victory (10), DNS, SDA and SNSD (2) and DF (1). Hence, Adam Šukalo, Bakir Izetbegović, Denis Zvizdić, Dragan Mektić, Igor Crnadak, Marko Pavić, Milan Dunović, Milorad Dodik, Mirko Šarović, Mladen Ivanić, Neđo Trninić, Sebija Izetbegović, Vukota Govedarica and Željka Cvijanović misused public resources for partisan purposes.

Political subjects organized transport for visitors to 13 pre-election events, and distribution of free drinks and food was organized at 15 pre-election rallies. Six (6) events were organized and attended by employees of public institutions during the working hours. There has been a note of inappropriate language and inflammatory, warmongering rhetoric during candidates' address at pre-election rallies.

Some other irregularities such as placing ads and posters, writing names or slogans associated with the election campaign inside or on the buildings of government institutions, public companies and institutions and local wards, on public roads and on public property were registered during the election campaign, which are also prohibited by law.

 “The Law is avoided immensely by those who participate directly in their making. If laws are not respected by those who will represent citizens of this country how can then citizens be expected to respect them?“, said Nina Zubović, Public Relations Coordinator of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

The Coalition calls on political subjects to act correctly and in line with the law during the election campaign and on competent institutions to sanction all electoral irregularities and speed up their response.

Observers also monitor the work of local election commissions. During the past eight weeks, local elections commissions held 688 sessions. More than 80% of the sessions were announced in advance, which is a progress compared to the 2014 and 2016 elections. Local election commissions received 19 observations and complaints about the election process, mainly concerning appointments of members of the polling station committees. All local election commissions operate in full capacity and have adopted Rules of Procedures, which is a progress compared to the first four weeks of reporting.

11 local election commissions fail to comply with the provisions of the Election Law concerning gender equality and 11 election commissions still have inadequate working conditions. There have also been the violations of deadlines of the election calendar by the local election commissions.

We remind citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that they can report all electoral irregularities ahead of Elections and on Election day to the Coalition “Pod lupom” by calling the toll-free number 080 05 05 05 or via the web page [www.podlupom.org](http://www.podlupom.org).

 The Coalition ''Pod lupom''