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

**No Sanctions for Increasing Violations of the Election Law**

*At today's press conference in Sarajevo, the Coalition for free and fair elections ''Pod lupom'', which observes the pre-election period, presented the First Preliminary Report on Long-term Observation of 2018 General Elections in BiH for the period from July 23 to September 2, 2019. The Report is available at the official web page of the Coalition* [*www.podlupom.org*](http://www.podlupom.org)*.*

The Coalition ‘’Pod lupom’’ has 63 long-term observers in all municipalities, towns and in Brcko District. Together they observe the work and the sessions of local election commissions; they observe the activities anticipated in the election calendar and compliance with deadlines; they detect and report electoral irregularities, monitor media and prepare observers for the Election Day.

This year, the Central Election Commission of BiH introduced several novelties into the election process and accepted three (3) recommendations advocated by the Coalition: to disclose names of all members of polling stations committees with information about their affiliation to the political subject on the day of their appointment to the polling station committee and on Election Day to prevent illicit trades of positions within polling station committees; to lower the height of voting booths to prevent family voting, taking photographs and ballot theft, and to introduce translucent voting booths to ensure a more transparent electoral process. Another novelty is certainly a step backwards. For the first time in 18 years, BiH citizens will vote on *de facto* closed lists, since the intra-party threshold on the lists of political subjects increased from 5% to 20%.

During the six-week reporting period, the Coalition's observers recorded 364 cases of premature and prohibited campaigning carried out by 32 political subjects. Despite the constant warnings pointing to this problem, the number of cases of premature campaigning is more than twice as large compared to the 2016 Local elections in BiH. “This tells us that political subjects disregard legal provisions and that the lack of sanctions encourages them to continue this practice,“ said Dario Jovanovic, Director of the Coalition ‘’Pod lupom’’.

Suspicion about voters’ register was raised in 10 municipalities; illicit trades of places within polling station committees are suspected in 14 municipalities and there is also one case of potential misuse of personal data for the purpose of voting by mail.

It is concerning that fake competitions on social networks appeared in May of the current year. To take part in the competition it was required to submit copies of both sides of a personal ID card, so it is likely that there was potential misuse of personal data. The Coalition calls on the competent institutions to investigate and sanction such cases.

31 cases involving misuse of public resources (money of all BIH citizens) were recorded. The cases are most frequently manifested as intensified public works, misuse of public funds, companies and public office. Pressure on voters and vote buying are registered in nine (9) cases as well as pressure on the long-term observers of the Coalition Pod lupom.

Unknown persons threatened and verbally attacked the Coalition's observers in two municipalities in Republika Srpska. All promotional materials of the Coalition were taken down right after they were displayed in one municipality. The Coalition will do everything to protect observers in the field. We call again on political subjects and citizens to comply with the law and refrain from exerting any pressure on observers. We call on public office holders to comply with election rules and regulations in the upcoming election campaign“, said Jelena Tanasković Mićanovič, Public Policy Coordinator of the Coalition.

All local election commissions operate in full capacity except in Kupres Municipality in RS. 11 local election commissions still lack adequate working conditions, which may affect the high-quality implementation of the election, while 12 local commissions fail to comply with the provisions of the Law concerning gender equality.

Failures to meet deadlines anticipated in the election calendar are also observed. Nine (9) local election missions failed to set the number and type of polling station by August 3; 21 local election commissions failed to assign the positions within polling station committees to the political subjects by August 8, and political subjects in more than half of municipalities and towns in BiH failed to propose members for polling station committees by August 15.

During media monitoring, pressure on the press was registered in nine (9) municipalities and there were also 34 cases in which the media published statements that contained the elements of hate speech, inappropriate language and inflammatory or warmongering rhetoric.

Similarly concerning are the attacks on journalists that took place during this year. The Coalition condemns in the harshest terms pressures and attacks on journalists, for, as it is said, without freedom of the press there are no free or fair elections.

As of September 7, which is when the campaign officially starts, the Coalition will have additional 42 observers in the field to report on all activities that are prohibited during the election campaign. Systematized monitoring of the press reporting will start on the same day and it will cover 30 media outlets and 40 days of press reporting, including 30 days of the election campaign and additional 10 days after the Election Day.

The Coalition “Pod lupom” will deploy 4,000 non-partisan observers on Election Day covering all municipalities, towns and Brcko District to protect every citizen’s vote regardless of whom they will give their vote.

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 any potential electoral irregularities.

The Coalition “Pod lupom”