Sarajevo, October 7, 2018

TO THE MEDIA

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Election Process by 9 am Under the Spotlight of the Coalition's observers**

*At today's press conference in Sarajevo, the Coalition for free and fair elections “Pod lupom”, which implements citizen, non-partisan observation of the 2018 General Elections in BiH, reported to the public about the Election-Day processes and incidents registered by 9 am.*

In the majority of polling stations Election Day began without any major irregularities, however, there were many technical shortcomings.

The vast majority of the Coalition's observers had unhindered access to polling stations. Preparations for the opening of polling stations were carried out mostly in line with the regulations. All members of the polling station committee were present at 82% of polling stations. A list containing names and surnames of members of the polling stations including the information about their affiliation to political subjects was not displayed in 21% of polling stations. This was the recommendation of the Coalition “Pod lupom” that the Central Election Commission adopted, and as such it is obligation of all polling station committees

Ballots were not counted manually in 2% of polling stations, and some elections materials were lacking in 6% of polling stations. In some isolated cases, ballot box was not shown empty prior to the opening of the polling station

Total 72% of polling stations opened at 7 am; 23 % of polling stations opened between 7 am and 7:15 am, and 5% of polling stations opened between 7:15 am and 8 am. In some isolated cases, polling stations opened after 8 am and the secrecy of vote was not adequately secured.

99 critical situations were registered by 9 am, of which 49 pertain to barring the observers from entering polling stations and sending them away from polling stations due to lack of communication between different levels of electoral authorities. In 4 cases suspicion was raised about the so-called Bulgarian train, i.e. one voter arrived ballot that was already filled out and left with blank ballots. Voting irregularities were registered in 9 cases.

The most serious report relates to the situation in Lopare where persons with forged accreditations of the political subjects visited polling stations and exerted pressure on the Coalition's observers. At the polling station 038A039 in Doboj, members of the polling station were replaced after the report of the critical situation involving ballots that were already filled out.   
  
Also, the Coalition received a report about the violation of electoral silence by a political subject (SBB), who sent SMSs to the citizens asking them to get out and vote.

The next press conference will take place at the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH at 11 pm, at which time the Coalition will provide information about the voting process and the close of polling stations.

38 critical situations were resolved successfully in cooperation with local election commissions.

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