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

**Observers of the Coalition “Pod lupom” have so far registered 238 election-related irregularities: Taking the lead are prohibited campaigning and abuse of public resources**

Coalition for Free and Fair Election “Pod lupom” that together with 85 civil society organizations (CSOs) and informal groups observes the pre-election period in BiH has at today’s press conference in Banja Luka presented the findings of long-term observation activities in the first three weeks of reporting by election observers (September 09 through September 27, 2020 ).

Hundred long-term observers of the Coalition “Pod lupom” registered 238 cases of election-related irregularities whereof 81 relate to premature, by law forbidden, campaigning in each third municipality/city in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“Any form of paid political advertising in the period from announcement of the elections to the official start of election campaign is prohibited by Election Law of BiH. This kind of premature campaigning represents a clear violation of the BiH Election Law.” – said Srđan Ostojić, Election Analysts of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

The next most frequent election-related irregularity relates to the abuse of public resources and the abuse of positions most commonly through intensification of public works and participation of public service employees in the campaigning of political subjects.

According to the number of registered cases next on the list are 19 cases of biased media reporting, 13 cases of pressure being exerted on the media or NGOs, and 11 cases of personal information abuse for the purpose of by-mail voting and inciting ethnic, religious or racial intolerance respectively. Of particular concern are 10 registered cases of vote buying and voter suppression.

Other cases of registered election-related irregularities refer to: voters’ register not being up to date in 8 municipalities, 5 cases of unlawful trade of seats on polling station committees, higher percentage of registration or deregistration in 2 municipalities, and 24 cases of other types of irregularities.

Apart from observing the work and sessions of the local election commissions, the long-term observers also monitor activities laid down by the election calendar and observance of the deadlines. The information that 62 local election commissions do not hold regular weekly sessions is quite concerning.

“According to the observers’ reports, 4 local election commission have not held a single session in the reporting period. These are Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Novi Grad, Pale (FBiH) and Stari grad Sarajevo.” – said Dario Jovanović, Project Manager of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

Four local election commission are still working in incomplete composition i.e. they are not completely staffed. These are Goražde, Teslić, Kupres RS and Petrovac. Five local election commission state that they do not have adequate working conditions. These are Bihać, Bosansko Grahovo, Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Sanski Most and Višegrad.

Although it is an obligation prescribed by the CEC, one election commission (Vitez) did not adopt its Rules of Procedure. Ten local election commissions are not observing provisions of the law concerning gender equality, where five do not have the right number of women represented, while the other five do not have the right number of men represented.

The deadlines laid down by the BiH CEC’s calendar are to a large extent being observed by the local election commissions. There was just one case registered in Ravno municipality where excerpt from the Central Voters’ Register was not publicly available to the citizens on time.

Political subjects filed 7 complaints to the local election commissions in the reporting period. These relate to the trade of seats on the polling station committees, political bias of the local election commissions and abuse of personal information for the purpose of out-of-country voting.

Ongoing activities of the Coalition “Pod lupom” are being carried out through STEP Project financed by the European Union, and co-financed by the United States Department of State. The STEP project strengthens the role and capacities of the civil society and citizens of BiH to efficiently support democratization processes by giving their contribution to free and fair elections in BiH. As part of the mission of civic, non-partisan observation of the 2020 Local Elections Coalition “Pod lupom” plans to deploy 3.000 non-partisan, civil observers to the polling stations across BiH on the Election Day (E-Day).

The objective of the coalition “Pod lupom” are free and fair elections. The objective of the Coalition “Pod lupom” is to protect votes of the citizens. We are not interested in election results – we are only interested in having results that truly reflect citizens’ will and we have been truly committed to that over the past six years.” – said Ilija Trninić, member of the Strategic Committee of the Coalition “Pod lupom”.

Coalition “Pod lupom” calls for these local elections to be conducted in a democratic environment, peacefully and with dignity, and invites all citizens to go to the polls and exercise their voting right. The observers of Coalition “Pod lupom” will do everything in their power to prevent infringement of this civic right.

Coalition “Pod lupom” use this opportunity to remind the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that they can apply to become E-Day observers by calling toll free number 080 05 05 05 or through website [www.podlupom.org,](http://www.podlupom.org/) and to report observed election-related irregularities at the aforementioned contacts.

 Sincerely

Coalition “Pod lupom”

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