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**POD LUPOM COALITION – PRESS RELEASE**

**Pod Lupom Coalition: Best Way to Prevent Electoral Fraud Is to Get Out and Vote**

*The Coalition for free and fair elections “Pod Lupom” that together with 85 civil society organizations and informal groups observe the pre-election period in BiH has presented at today’s press conference in Sarajevo the results of the long-term observation of the 2020 Local Election in BiH, for the period 7 September-8 November 2020. One hundred long-term observers on a weekly basis report on the activities in the field and until now they sent 1284 regular reports with key findings and held 1677 meetings with various actors of the election process.*

As part of the long-term observation effort from 7 September to 8 November 2020 the Coalition’s observers registered 1245 electoral irregularities. The largest number of these irregularities relate to the premature election campaigning. The Pod Lupom Coalition received reports of 242 such cases in 65 municipalities in BiH. The analysis of the premature campaign-related reports show that the largest number of the cases referred to the following political subjects: SDA (24), SNSD (21), SDP (10), SDS (8), HDZ BIH (7), PDP (6), DNS (6), etc.

*“The election campaign period is characterized by new circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is evident that many political subjects shifted their activities to social media networks because of these new circumstances. Cases that are raising concerns and are unacceptable relate to holding rallies in spite of all recommendations for preventing the spread of the virus, without any reaction from the competent authorities or any sanctions,”* said Dario Jovanović, the Pod Lupom Coalition Project Manager.

The Coalition's observers recorded 201 cases where civil servants or other employees in the public administration or public companies worked for the purpose of election campaign in 48 municipalities/towns in BiH. A case that stands out for its level of arrogance took place in East Sarajevo. It involved blocking a whole street in order to ensure safety of the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers during his visit to one of the nearby restaurants together with his party colleague, a minister in the Council of Ministers. The Coalition's observers reported on 163 cases of misuse of the public resources in 57 municipalities/towns.

The analysis of the reports shows that the largest number of such cases relate to the following political subjects: SNSD (45), SDA (30), SDS (11), HDZ BIH (10), DNS (5), SDP (5), and other political subjects.

Trading for seats on polling station committees continues – the most drastic examples of this practice come from Zvornik where SNSD has all or the majority of members in at least 15 of 87 polling station committees. Stanari, with less than 8000 voters, is another example where as many as 39 political subjects are registered to participate in the election indicating the presence of phantom political parties whose goal is to trade seats on the polling station committees.

SDA activists and members in Bugojno participate in the trading for seats on the polling station committees. For example, SDA activist Sead Hujdur that actively supports SDA on Facebook is on the polling station committee representing HDZ 1990. Three deputy presidents of youth association of the SDA Municipal Board in Bugojno (Amra Jusufbašić, Irfan Zec, Vildana Mutevelić) are on the polling station committees representing HDZ 1990 and independent candidate Miličević Niko.

In Livno, the SDA Youth Association activists (Samir Čakar and Lejla Hodžić) are on the polling station committees on behalf of Zavičajni socijaldemokrati (Regional Social Democrats). HDZ BiH activist in Livno (Kristina Čeko), participant of the HDZ political academy is on the polling station committee on behalf of the same political subject – Zavičajni socijaldemokrati (Regional Social Democrats). She reacted to the announcement about this irregularity and in her comment, she confirmed that HDZ BiH had agreed the exchange of seats on the polling station committees with Zavičajni socijaldemokrati (Regional Social Democrats).

SDA activist in Lukavac, Ernest Mujagić, has been appointed to the polling station committee by SNSD while SDA activist in Maglaj (Emina Smajić) is on the polling station committee on behalf of Prva stranka (First Party).

In Živnice, SDA activist Anela Ajšić has been appointed to the polling station committee by Pozitivna živinička priča independent list (Positive Živinice's story). In Sapna, PDA activist Emir Mahmutović has been appointed to the polling station committee on behalf of the independent candidate Smajlović Munib.

In the majority of the cases where trading for seats on the polling station committees has been proven, it is about false representation and the Coalition believes that these proven cases should be processed as such, if not on some other grounds.

The Coalition registered a substantial number of reports and allegations of personal data misuse for the purpose of voter registration for voting by mail. This involves several thousands of citizens. The largest number of those registered for voting by mail come from Serbia (27 500) and Croatia (19 000). There are some drastic examples of the number of applications for voting by mail in BiH municipalities and towns – in Dobretici, a small municipality in Central Bosnia, almost 37% of the total electorate is registered for voting by mail.

Another practice that has continued in the 2020 Local election is pressure on voters and vote buying, where, according to the documented allegations, the price of a vote is between 50 and 150 KM. The Coalition's observers reported on 77 such cases in 45 municipalities/towns.

The Coalition’s long-term observers continuously observe the work of 143 local election commissions. It raises concern that the deadlines set in the CEC's calendar are increasingly being violated by the local election commissions as we approach Election day, even though they were strictly complied with in the beginning. The deadlines were violated in 25 cases by as many as 24 local election commissions. The Voter Register Center is not available to citizens in Ključ. The local election commissions in Bosansko Grahovo, Čapljina, Tomislavgrad and Zenica failed to within the legal deadline select the polling station locations and submit the certificates to the CEC BiH. Also, according to the information from the field, it was established that the local election commissions in Bihać, Travnik, Vitez, Jablanica, Ilidža, Odžak and Kladanj failed to complete training for members of the polling station committees by the deadline of November 8, 2020. It was registered that 11 local election commissions failed to disclose the documentation confirming the appointment of the polling station committees, while the local election commissions in Bosansko Grahovo, Laktaši and Stolac failed to appoint members of the polling stations committees in a timely fashion.

Pod Lupom observers recorded that the local election commissions received 58 election process-related complaints in 33 municipalities and towns. The complaints mainly relate to the lottery procedure for allocation of positions in the polling station committees and voter registration for voting by mail.

*According to the latest information from the Central Election Commission of BiH, of November 12, 2020, regarding the local election commissions’ implementation of the Instruction on Conduct of Elections at time of Covid-19, it is stated that after telephone calls and direct contacts between the CEC's staff and members of the local election commissions only four election commissions (Han Pijesak, Kreševo, Ravno and Vitez) failed to secure the necessary materials; however, two of them pledged to do so before Election day (Ravno and Vitez). This is encouraging given that this information only 24 hours earlier indicated that as many as 30 local election commission refused to implement the Instruction and that 42 local election commissions failed to submit their answers about the implementation of the measures,* said Srđan Ostojić, Election Analyst at the Pod Lupom Coalition.

The information from the field indicates a similar situation where a vast majority of the local election commissions have secured minimum basic materials such as disinfectants and protective gear (masks and gloves) in order to protect the health and prevent the spread of the virus at polling stations. It raises concerns that 23 local election commissions stated that they did not have at their disposal sufficient materials and equipment to comply with all Covid-19 measures prescribed by the CEC BiH. The Coalition's observers will monitor on Election day the implementation of the prescribed epidemiological measures.

It is extremely important to note that even though the CEC amended in September the Rulebook on Conduct of Elections in BiH to allow the voters who are still not in possession of a document of the competent body certifying that their names are on the competent institutions’ register of these categories of voters, the November 10 amendments to the Rulebook allow this category of voters to exercise their right to vote via a special mobile team if they, along with the request that they submit to the competent local election commission, also submit an appropriate document issued by the competent authority or body, i.e., medical report confirming a positive Covid-19 test or decision prescribing the isolation.

*“Taking into account that the situation in the field is such that the competent bodies frequently fail to submit these tests or decisions of isolation, or that they submit them by post and that they often arrive after the period of isolation, there is concern that many of these voters will be hindered or disallowed from voting in election due to untimely issuance of all relevant documents. Moreover, considering daily numbers of positive Covid-19 cases or the number of citizens in possession of decisions of isolation, several thousands of citizens will be without the right to vote on Election day,”* – said Hasan Kamenjaković, Pod Lupom's PR Coordinator.

Pod Lupom calls for a prompt action to solve this problem to restore BiH citizens' rights to vote.

In addition, the Coalition calls on all local election commissions to comply with the [Instruction on Operation of the Election Management Bodies on the Election day in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic,](https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/Lokalni_izbori_2020/Izborna_administracija_glasanje_GCB/Instrukcija15072020_bos.pdf)  and on all political subjects to adjust their activities and comply with all measuers in order to prevent the virus from spreading. Pod lupom calls on BiH citizens to comply with the protective and epidemiological measures and recommendations and to exercise their right, as voting is the best way to prevent ballot misuse or electoral irregularities.

On Election day, Pod lupom will engage 3 000 non-partisan observers that will do their best to make sure that no one abuses the citizens' right to vote.

We remind the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that all election irregularities can be reported to the Pod Lupom Coalition via our webpage [www.podlupom.org](http://www.podlupom.org) or via our toll free number 080 05 05 05.

The gallery of electoral irregularities recorded by the Pod Lupom coalition can be viewed at the following link: <https://bit.ly/2InO5wn> .