Election process until 10:00 hrs (opening of polls, observers' access, and critical incidents)

The Coalition for free and fair elections “Pod Lupom” that has together with 85 civil society organizations and informal groups engaged 2 600 citizens, non-partisan observers to observe the 2020 Local election in BiH, informed the public at today’s press conference in Sarajevo about the opening of the polls, observers’ access to the polls and the incidents the observers recorded until 10:00 hrs.

98% of observers were allowed unhindered access to the polling stations to which they were assigned. The problem in accessing the PS was present in 46 PS, the majority of which are located in Doboj. This situation is currently being resolved with the City Election Commission Doboj and in communication with the polling station committees. It is expected that the Coalition's observers will be allowed to observe the election process. Similar situation was recorded in a number of PS in Banja Luka. 24 cases were resolved while the remaining ones are in the process of being resolved. Initially, the observers were not allowed into the PS under the pretense of inability to comply with the epidemiological measures, however, they were subsequently allowed the access. This tells us that the observers were not allowed the access because of arbitrary actions of the polling station committee.

In 87% of the cases, all members of the polling station committee were present at the polls at 6:00 hrs.

In 96% of the PS, it was observed that the polling stations were organized according to the Instruction on Operation of the Election Management Bodies on the Election Day in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic issued by the Central Election Commission of BiH. 25 PS failed to comply with the CEC's instructions.

It raises concerns that, every third polling station in the country is missing a list of the polling station committee members and the name of the political subject for every member of the committee, even though this is an obligation.

Some polling station material was missing at 6% of the PS, while ballots were not hand-counted at 2% of the PS.

130 ballots were missing at one PS in Banja Luka. After this critical incident was reported, it was stated that ballots would be delivered subsequently. At 99% of the polls, the ballot box was shown to be empty prior to the opening of the polls.

Total 84% of the polling stations opened at 7:00 hrs, while the remaining polls opened after up to one- hour delay. Three polls opened after a delay of more than one hour: 103B017 in Vlasenica, 123B009 in Han Pijesak and 173A001 in Čapljina.

Secrecy of the voting is ensured at all polling stations; the voting booths are set up in a way that no one can see how other person voted. Secrecy of the voting was compromised in Prijedor, where voting booths were placed next to a window allowing everyone to see the voting process. The situation was resolved after this was reported by Pod lupom’s observer. Such situation was also recorded in Bratunac; however, it was resolved after observer’s reaction.

Pressure on voters was recorded in Zavidovići where one GDS party observer from the polling station Dolina in in Zavidovici came to Alići polling station in Zavidovići and entered the voting booth exerting verbal pressure on voters. The president of the polling station committee initially concluded that the observer was entitled to such action. After the Pod lupom Coalition reported the case, the Local election commission contacted the respective political subject pointing out that any similar behavior shall be sanctioned by removing the observer from the polling station. The polling station committee was also contacted, and the case was recorded in the minutes.

Photographing the ballots was recorded in Sanski Most, and after a report was made by our observer, the case was recorded in the Minutes on operation of the polling station committee (loc. ZARBO).

In Trnovo FBiH, more than 15 cases of family voting were recorded. Pod Lupom observer is currently working on resolving this situation. The cases of family voting were also recorded in Ilijaš.

A case of physical fight took place in Gradačac when a member of the polling station committee expelled the PDA candidate. This case was recorded in the Minutes on operation of the polling station committee.

Total number of recorded critical incidents is 84, 46 of which are related to disallowing the observation effort. 24 cases were resolved successfully. Other cases refer to insufficient election materials, compromising the secrecy of the voting at two polls in Prijedor and Bratunac, and family voting at two polls in Trnovo FBiH and Ilijaš.

The Coalition calls on BiH citizens to exercise their right to vote. The Coalition calls on political subjects in BiH to respect election silence and the Election Law of BiH.

BiH citizens can report all observed election irregularities by calling Pod Lupom's toll free number 080 05 05 05 or via the following link <https://bih2020.electionsobserver.org/neregularnosti/> .

Our next press conference is scheduled to take place at 23:00 hrs when Pod Lupom will bring you the information about the voting process and the closing of the polls.

*For any additional information please contact Hasan Kamenjaković, Pod Lupom Public Relations and Media Coordinator via email at* *pr@podlupom.org* *or via telephone at 063 396 521*