

Mostar, December 22 2020

Dear Sir,

Allow me to take this opportunity to address you with several words on the occasion of the Local elections held in the City of Mostar on December 20th, 2020. As you are aware, these elections are outlined as the first of the 14 priorities of the European Commission for the path of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union, which is why they carry additional importance for the perspective of a European BiH.

I am addressing you, above all, as members of the European family and long-term partners, as well as friends, whose contribution is far-reaching and affirmative for the future of stability and development of BiH. I hold it to be beyond important to bring to your attention the alarming threats to the integrity of the election process in Mostar, which are now quite certain.

Namely, on December 20, 2020, after 12 long years, citizens of Mostar participated in the Local elections, convinced of a democratic step forward that will not be tainted by the compromising of the election results. Many of them are young people voting for the first time. Should the results not be a realistic reflection of their commitment, I am convinced that there is a real risk of undermining their belief in building their future in BiH. It is necessary to consider this in a long-term and broad context of brain drain and general demographic trends.

HDZ BiH has done everything in its power to fully protect the integrity of the election process in the City of Mostar. In doing so, we repeatedly called on international officials and observers to do everything in their power to help conduct elections in Mostar in line with European standards, in a fair and equitable manner. We also called for their increased presence and attention on the election day as well as close monitoring of the work of the BiH Central Election Commission and warned against fictitious voter registrations for which concerns were expressed in a timely manner, noting that they could inappropriately affect the result. This was done in hope of helping to prevent manipulations that would damage independent political will - as has been done to the Croatian people so many times thus far.

I am particularly saddened to inform you that it is now quite clear that the electoral engineering of (pro)Bosniak parties, supported by the activities of CEC, which operates in an illegal and illegitimate composition, is actively changing the electoral will of residents for their own political gain. Our reasonable doubt is first reflected in the following:

- A recount was ordered for more than 46% of the total polling stations in the City of Mostar, pointing to "night counting", irregular counting, severe vote manipulation and further discrediting of the already discredited the CEC BiH. A dramatic difference between the figures published during the evening in the presence of observers and the figures officially published on the website www.izbori.ba was observed at a large number of polling stations;
- The blocking of the output of the results of the counting process following the closing of the polling stations (still ongoing), therefore providing a time frame for the consolidation and implementation of previously organized criminal proceedings;

- The scandalous transfer of fictitious voters orchestrated by the Bosniak parties and the CEC to city areas with a predominantly Croatian population in an attempt to illegally acquire mandates and influence the overall election outcome. In that regard, the Croatian National Assembly of BiH filed criminal charges with the with the Prosecutor's Office of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, having come to realize that these are fictitious voters and addresses, etc.

This significantly disrupts relations and continues to destabilize political dialogue, which, although much needed, is now further disrupted. This also violated the political agreement on the Local Elections in Mostar, reached in June of this year, which was attended by international representatives in BiH as witnesses and guarantors, and which enabled the holding of elections in Mostar. The nonconsequential lack of compliance with and open violation of the consensus do not set a good example for our multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional society. Still, we wanted to believe that a breakthrough had finally been made. Unfortunately, that step forward has just been brutally stomped.

Despite our faith in a fair political match, the policy of carefully organized crime and national intolerance towards Croats overcome our efforts. As a large European family and as institutions of the European Union, one cannot ignore the cataclysmic consequences of these systematic election frauds, which not only affect the integrity of one of the most anticipated elections on European soil but also affect the European Commission's priority for the EU path of BiH.

We must not allow ourselves to turn a blind eye to the gross violation of the values we call European, and which represent the basis of our work. Thus, I appeal to your support in the strongest condemnation of electoral engineering and absolute support in the fight for a fair, democratic, and transparent electoral process that is of a too great importance - for a European Mostar and a European BiH.

We ask for the urgent involvement of international actors, partners, and friends and the involvement of all relevant institutions in shedding light on the events that, through their unsustainable, scandalous, and dangerous behaviour, hinder the stability and the European path of the City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole and its inhabitants.

With expressions of the highest considerations,

President of HNS BiH

Dragan Čović, PhD

Josep Borrell

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

Olivér Várhelyi

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy

Paulo Rangel

European Parliament Rapporteur for Bosnia and Herzegovina

David McAllister

Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (AFET)

Romeo Franz

Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo