





# Description of the Project

The program “Assistance to Citizens in the Fight against Corruption (ACFC)” is implemented by the Centers for Civic Initiatives, the lead implementer, and Transparency International (TI BiH) and the Center for Media Development and Research (CRMA), the implementing partners. The project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The implementation period is from September 2019 to September 2024.

The program aims to increase citizens’ participation in combating corruption, and all of its activities are designed to encourage strong and sustainable anti-corruption activism across the country and across all levels. The purpose of the ACFC project is to help civil society become representative and credible in the fight against corruption.

The following activities are realized within the project:

- Monitoring and advocacy for anti-corruption legislation in the following areas: conflict of interest, whistleblower protection, public procurement, and abuse of public resources in election campaigns;
- Engagement of citizens and building a culture that rejects corruption;
- Coordination and building capacities of organizations involved.

# Map of anticorruption activists across Bosnia and Herzegovina



Contact them via their FB pages!

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- Banja Luka**
- CA "Restart Srpska"
- Union of the Employers' Association of Republika Srpska
- Association "Think good"
- CA "Road of Justice"
- ICG "Save Karanovac"
- Center for Education "Pro Educa"
- The Association "Perpetuum Mobile – Institute for Youth and Community Development"
- The Association for Promotion of European Standards and Improvement of the Business Environment – Capital
- Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka
- ITEA Banja Luka - for Ideas, Education, Equality, and Affirmation

- Bijeljina**
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
- ICG "Stop illegal exploitation of gravel in Bijeljina"
- Environmental Association Eko Put

- Bjelašnica**
- ICG "To Stop Illegal Construction on Bjelašnica and Igman"

- Brčko**
- ICG "For Transparent Financing of Non-Profit Organizations from the Budget of the Brčko District"
- Youth Center Vermont
- CA "Demos"
- ICG "For recognized diplomas from accredited higher education institutions in the Brčko District of BiH"

- Breza**
- ICG "To Remove an Illegal Waste Dump in Nedići, Breza"

- Bugojno**
- ICG "Poriče"

- Bužim**
- The Association of Dystrophics Bužim

- Doboj**
- ICG "For the legal exploitation of minerals from the Bosna river"
- ICG "STOP to unaccredited universities in the RS"
- ICG "Remove Hexane from Kotorsko"
- Center for Humane Politics
- Citizens Association Tolerance of Diversity (ToPeeR)

- Drvar**
- ICG "Drvar Without Italian Waste"

- Foča**
- ICG "Drvar Without Italian Waste"

- Goražde**
- ICG "Save Drina"
- ICG „Goražde Without Pesticide"
- ICG "Glamoč Communities against Illegal Waste Dumps"

- EastSarajevo**
- NGG "Stop izgradnji mHE na ICG "STOP to the Construction of mHps on the river Kasindolska"

- Women's Interactive Rural Center (ŽIR)

- Jablanica**
- ICG "For Doljanku"

- Konjic**
- ICG "Neretvica - Let Me Flow"

- Kozarska Dubica**
- ICG "React Against Irregularities Threatening the Health and Environment"

- Kreševo**
- ICG "Stop Quarries Without Permits"

- Kakanj**
- ICG "Nature Park Trstionica and Boriva"

- Livno**
- CA "the Center for Citizens' Cooperation"

- Maglaj**
- ICG "For Legal Exploitation of Minerals in the Upper Section of the river Bosna"
- Association Fojničani

- Mostar**
- CA "Because We Care"
- ICG "Initiative against the construction of Buna 1 and 2 mHp"
- ICG "Stop to illegal construction in Bijeli Brijeg"
- ICG "No to construction on Buna and in my Blagaj"
- ICG "Citizens' Initiative Kuti"
- The Association for Improving Quality of Living – Futura Mostar
- Association Bura info
- ICG Stop Illegal Amendments to the Spatial Plan in Mostar"

- Petrovo**
- ICG "Keepers of Ozren"

- Prijedor**
- Consumer Protection Association "DON Prijedor"
- ICG „Be My Voice"

- Sarajevo**
- ICG "Hastahana park"
- ICG "Initiative KCUS"
- ICG "Zgrada"
- Association „Ja BiH u EU"
- Employers' Association in the Federation of BiH
- BIRN BiH
- Association "Baby Steps"
- Association Union of the Fund's Employees
- Forestry and Environment Action
- Aarhus centa
- ICG "Last minute rescue – Let's save Dobrinja"
- The Union for Sustainable Return and Integrations in BiH
- Association of Public Procurement Professionals, Trainers and Officers in BiH (UPTIS)
- ICG „We Want Drinking Water and Clean Air – against the Illegal Construction on Bjelašnica and Igman"
- ICG "Stop Construction Threatening Citizens -Aleja lipa"

- Center for Development of Informal Education

- Sanski Most**
- ICG "Life on Coal -NO to Exploitation that Endangers Life"

- Šipovo**
- ICG "Farmeri"

- Tešanj**
- ICG "Non-transparent spending of budget funds for water supply to citizens"
- ICG "Keepers of Usora"

- Trebinje**
- CA "Stop mobbing"
- ICG "Movement for Restitution Trebinje"

- Trnovo**
- ICG "Stop to Disposal of Illegal Waste at the Krupačke stijene Waste Dump"

- Tuzla**
- The civic movement "Waking Up"
- ICG "Initiative against the landfill for slag and ash from the thermal power plant in local community Šićki Brod"
- The Association "Forum of Tuzla Citizens"

- Visoko**
- ICG "To Prevent Abuse in Issuing Operation Permits to Organizers of Games of Chance (betting, lotteries, etc).

- Višegrad**
- ICG "Defend the Rivers of Višegrad"
- ICG "Remove Illegal Waste Dump on the Outskirts of a Tourist Town"

- Vitez**
- ICG "Courageous Women of Kruščica"
- Initiative "Illegality of Spending the Building Maintenance Funds in Vitez"

- Vlasenica**
- ICG „Eco Activists Vlasenica"

- Zavidovići**
- ICG "Stog Hadžići against Quarry"

- Zenica**
- ICG "Air guards"
- ICG "Movement for change"
- ICG "The Illegible Unemployed"

- Zvornik**
- ICG "STOP to illegal gravel pits on the Drina river"
- ICG "Stop the Construction of an Asphalt Base in Tršić"
- ICG "Justice for (Hotel) Drina"

- Žepče**
- ICG "Stop illegal exploitation of gravel in the area of Žepče and Zavidovići"



## **PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR THE BUNA CHANNELS SECURED AFTER NEARLY A DECADE OF STRUGGLE**

At its July 10 meeting, the Government of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (HNC) adopted a decision to terminate the concession for the construction of mini-hydropower plants in the area of the Buna Channels, fulfilling the final demand of environmental activists, local residents, and all citizens who have been appalled by the idea of destroying such natural beauty for the profit of investors and their government representatives from the very beginning. Ten years ago, several environmental organizations and residents began a fight against the construction of mini-hydropower plants (mHE) on the Buna Channels. The HNC Government and the investor have signed a concession agreement for the construction of mHE Buna 1 and Buna 2 at the confluence of the Buna and Neretva rivers, at the location of the beautiful Buna Channels, which have been protected since 1970 as nature monument. Following this, the investor began to realize their intentions and, in mid-2015, applied for an environmental permit from the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The public debate scheduled for July was interrupted after participants, primarily representatives of environmental organizations and residents of Buna and Blagaj, opposed the construction of mHE. The minutes were never delivered to the participants, and in November 2015, despite opposition from the local community, the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism granted an environmental permit to the investor. However, this did not discourage the activists; they embarked on a legal battle, and in administrative proceedings, the environmental permit was annulled. Environmental associations, including local NGOs and residents of the Buna area, filed a lawsuit against the environmental permit. After the annulment of the environmental permit, meetings with decision-makers began. Various memos were written to government institutions at both local and FBiH levels. A petition-signing campaign collected over 5,000 signatures from citizens, and press conferences, numerous street actions, and round tables were organized. Intense public pressure on decision-makers resulted in the rejection of the investor's request for preliminary water consent twice and for urban consent three times. Activists repeatedly addressed councilors of the City Council of Mostar, some of whom boldly initiated the removal of mHEs from the Mostar Spatial Plan. This resulted in adopting the decision to amend the Spatial Plan, leading to a significant victory for the activists on November 29, 2022. Two mHEs on the Buna Channels were removed from the Spatial Plan, creating space for further actions through the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Assembly to permanently protect this site. They repeatedly demanded the HNC Government to review and terminate the concession agreement. The HNC government always referred them to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management, whose response was that the concession agreement specified the conditions under which it could be terminated and that the activists' claims were not in line with the provisions of the concession agreement. Alternatively, they would respond that they did not have the information cited by the activists, namely, that the mHEs had been removed from the Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Mostar because they had not received notification from the City of Mostar about it. After meetings with some assembly representatives, an official initiative to terminate the concession was launched in 2022, but it was only terminated two years after the initiative. In line with the proverb "Justice is Slow but Attainable," the activists' decade-long dream came true. Even before this significant victory, which ultimately achieved permanent protection of the Buna Channels, this natural jewel became a well-known story throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina for several reasons. It became a synonym for activism and an example of a long-term successful fight for environmental protection. The battle against the construction of mHEs on the Buna Channels became synonymous with the fight against corruption due to legal battles and successful lawsuits highlighting the irregularities in obtaining the necessary documentation.



## **THE ICG ZGRADA – FROM UNCERTAINTY TO MAYORAL ARREST AND THE EFFORTS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE DONE**

The informal group of citizens “Zgrada” from Sarajevo began the fight against the irregular modification of the Regulatory Plan (RP) three years ago when the residents of Maguda Street in Stari Grad, then still unorganized, learned from the media that part of the yard in front of their building had suddenly become a plot designated as a construction site and was being sold. Shocked by the situation in which they found themselves, which negatively impacted their life and homes, they were confident that the changes to the RP and the land parceling were not done in accordance with the law. Since then, they have been engaged in a legal battle to uncover the illegalities in this case and protect their rights.

More tangible results in their fight occurred last year when SIPA, following the order of the cantonal prosecutor’s office, seized all documentation related to this case from the municipality, thus halting the issuance of building permits. On May 9, 2023, the then-municipal mayor was arrested. In April 2024, the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo confirmed the indictment. In June, the trial began against the former mayor of the Stari Grad Sarajevo municipality, Ibrahim Hadžibajrić, and other individuals for the most severe corruption-related criminal offenses prescribed by the laws of the Federation of BiH and the Canton of Sarajevo. One of the counts in the indictment relates to the illegal sale of a plot on Maguda Street in Sarajevo, which “Zgrada” has been fighting against.

However, this is not the end of the citizens’ fight. Besides demanding accountability for what has been done, it is now necessary for the new authorities to repair the damage caused by the previous ones. Therefore, the citizens advocate for removing the planned residential-commercial building from the RP, which is within the scope of this national monument. As a result of advocacy activities, an SDP council member filed a council initiative to discuss and vote on changes to the RP at one of the upcoming sessions, thus finally preventing the illegal construction of the planned building.



## **THE NOVO SARAJEVO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SCHEDULES A SESSION TO DISCUSS THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE REQUESTING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE DECISION TO INITIATE AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE RP "HRASNO I"**

Significant steps have finally been made in the fight by the residents of Aleja Lipa Street in Sarajevo. Activities on drafting amendments to the RP "Hrasno I" have been suspended, given that the Commission for the Preservation of National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the petition/proposal of the residents of Aleja Lipa Street initiated the procedure to declare the Dom Penzionera building a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the residents of this street and the local community "Trg Heroja" also launched a citizens' initiative and collected 381 signatures from residents of this local community, requesting the Municipal Council of Novo Sarajevo to revoke the Decision to initiate amendments to the regulatory plan "Hrasno I". This citizens' initiative will be on the agenda of the Municipal Council at the next session scheduled for July 25 of this year.

As a reminder, the residents of the Sarajevo neighborhood Hrasno were unpleasantly surprised in the summer of last year when they saw a call for a public hearing on the notice boards regarding the adoption of the Decision to initiate amendments to the regulatory plan "Hrasno I." This Decision was made in October 2022, and the public hearing was scheduled for July 2023. In the midst of the holiday season, without a clear explanation of what the amendments pertain to, the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo attempted to urgently amend the regulatory plan so that a private investor could build a residential-commercial building on the site of the former "Dom Penzionera" in Aleja Lipa Street.

Although the Dom Penzionera building has been abandoned for years and is in poor condition, the residents of the surrounding buildings opposed the announced construction because these amendments to the regulatory plan would allow the construction of buildings twice the size, with two underground floors, which would directly affect the safety of neighboring buildings built in the 1970s, the quality of life of residents, the value of their property. It would also limit their right to natural light, green spaces, a walkway, and a view of the Miljacka River.

Additionally, the residents were further concerned that these amendments covered an area of about 1,900 square meters while the new building had a total gross area of about 900 square meters. This indicates that part of the public area would be given to the private investor in a neighborhood already lacking space for residents, parking, and recreation.

For all these reasons, the citizens organized to protect their property and their right to a quality and peaceful life. Since last year, they have been trying to influence municipal councilors not to adopt the proposed amendments to the regulatory plan. Despite the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo's plan to adopt the amendments to the regulatory plan urgently, they have not yet been adopted. And as things currently stand, they won't be!





## **“MOVEMENT FOR RESTITUTION” TREBINJE WINS A LEGAL BATTLE**

The District Court in Banja Luka ruled on May 28, 2024, in favor of the plaintiff, the Citizens' Association "Movement for Restitution" Trebinje, against the Decision of the RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction, and Ecology regarding the construction of the new hospital on land seized from its owners before the land consolidation over half a century ago, when the then authorities converted it into agricultural land. This Association filed two lawsuits against the RS Government and the relevant ministry, arguing that the ministry illegally issued a construction permit for building the hospital complex on what they claim is confiscated property. In the contested act of the ministry, the Banja Luka Court upheld the lawsuit against the issuance of the construction permit for preparatory works, thus, at least temporarily, preventing the authorities from abusing power. "We believe in the rule of law, and this verdict is the beginning of victory over the usurper. Justice may be slow, but it is attainable, and the "Movement for Restitution" will not stop until those responsible for such abuse of authority are brought to justice. May 3 marks a year since the usurping government and their contractor began the project to destroy Trebinje Field. For two years, we have tried to persuade the usurpers not to make such catastrophic mistakes and to adhere to the law and the previous plans to build the facility in Draženska Gora. It is sad how rotten the system is and how much the authorities have abused their position, with all institutions subordinated to them. When we protested in 2022 on August 18 by plowing our fields, the usurping authorities sent three police patrols to intimidate us, without considering what might have happened," stated the "Movement for Restitution" Trebinje after the Banja Luka District Court ruling. Activists assert that they warned that instead of the police investigating how the usurper acquired ownership of their seized property, they insisted, without any warrant or disclosing their sender, that citizens leave their fields and stop plowing the land of their ancestors. "They even collected data from everyone present, making it obvious that the police were not working in the people's interest but at the request of an individual or group aiming to usurp the entire Trebinje Field. We have addressed everything related to the events in Trebinje through protests and by speaking out in independent media. Even though the usurper tries to convince us that the rule of law does not exist, we have filed three lawsuits against them, two of which concern the issuance of contested construction permits. Most importantly, a lawsuit has been filed against RUGIP, where it all started. We must emphasize that we will not give up on reclaiming what is ours. The authorities will have to return to the framework of the law, and until then, let the bodies dealing with the legal protection of citizens' property do their job," stated the activists of this Association. As for the ruling of the Banja Luka District Court, it was justified by the argument that the RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction, and Ecology conducted administrative proceedings without the Decision to convert agricultural land into construction land, thus accepting the lawsuit and annulling the contested act of the ministry. "According to Article 50 of the Law on Administrative Disputes, the defendant is obliged to immediately, and no later than 30 days from the receipt of this judgment, issue a new administrative act, taking into account the court's legal understanding and the court's objections regarding the proceedings," the judgment states. The "Movement for Restitution" Trebinje emphasizes that they are aware that they have only won one legal battle and face a long and difficult fight, which, however, they will not abandon until they stop the construction on agricultural land and reclaim the land taken from their ancestors.

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## RESIDENTS OF POLOM NEAR BRATUNAC DEFEND THE DRINA RIVER AGAINST GRAVEL MINE

The residents of Polom near Bratunac did not allow the gravel miners to cross their property and extract gravel from the Drina River's bed, even after the contract annexation "Voda" with the gravel mining company. The Public Institution "Vode Srpske" had no choice but to state that the contractor they had signed an agreement with could not complete the work since the residents prevented them in all attempts to access the Drina River. This decision confirmed the victory of the citizens, who bravely fought to protect their river.

"From the very beginning, we had a sense that something suspicious was afoot and that it wouldn't be worth it for the company 'Bukom Prom' for that amount to build an access road, set up storage for the extracted material, and ensure other conditions, including returning the land to its original state after the work was done. We suspected that the gravel miners would leave a destroyed beach and devastation behind, which we have seen at many places along the rivers Drina, Bosna, Vrbas, and other rivers," the residents of Poloma express satisfaction with the successful outcome of their persistence. Despite the Vlasenica company claims of having all documentation and conditions secured for work in the Drina River bed, the residents of Poloma argued that this was not true and that without all the conditions provided, in this case, access to the river, the gravel miner could not execute the contract and perform work in the Drina River bed.

To remind, the dispute with the gravel miners began in August of last year when the gravel miners attempted to approach the local resort and beach in Poloma with their machinery. The outraged residents stood before the bulldozers and trucks, preventing them from working. The miners intended to exploit gravel in this local community until the end of 2023 under the contract with "Vode Srpske" and to extract 4,220.13 cubic meters of river material from the Drina Riverbed. After the RS Inspectorate decided to postpone the work, this deadline was moved to June 1, 2024.

Everything ended in victory for the citizens! The credit for the success belongs solely or primarily to the residents of Poloma, who have shown that by organizing, citizens can defend their rights and interests.





## **RESIDENTS OF THE GLAMOČ COMMUNITY NEAR GORAŽDE RAISE THEIR VOICES AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LANDFILL NEAR THEIR HOMES**

Since 2010, waste has been dumped in the area of Goražde, in the place called Šišete. At that time, the Goražde City Council decided that waste would be temporarily dumped at that location—for a period of two years. Those ‘temporary’ two years have turned into fourteen years, and now the capacity of that landfill is full. Because of this, the city authorities have made a new decision, also ‘temporary’—to move the landfill to the Trešnjica location. However, to reach Trešnjica, one must pass through the settlement of Glamoč where around 200 residents live, including 40 children. The Glamoč community still does not have an adequate road, which makes it impossible for two cars to pass each other, and the children must retreat to private properties to avoid cars. The road is also their only place to play, which makes the cars a significant threat. “Daily passage of waste trucks would further endanger them.

In an attempt to protect themselves, their children, and their neighborhood, the residents of Glamoč formed an informal group of citizens called “The Glamoč Community Against Wild Waste Dumps.” As a first step in their fight, they submitted two initiatives to the city authorities. One initiative is precisely about the disputed waste dump at the Trešnjica location, while the other initiative concerns the establishment of the Glamoč Local Community. So far, these two topics have not been discussed in the Goražde City Council meetings, which is why the residents of the Glamoč settlement continue their fight with determination, primarily to prevent the opening of a waste dump at Trešnjica. The local authorities have the idea of initially opening a temporary waste dump at the Trešnjica location and, over time, establishing a regional waste dump according to all international standards. However, residents are skeptical about wastewater and forest protection because the waste dump would be located on top of a hill and in the middle of a forest, and the access road to the landfill causes serious concerns since property-legal relations have not been resolved. In their efforts to persist in their fight, they have announced a series of activist steps, simultaneously invoking the law by pointing out that there is no legal formulation for a ‘temporary waste dump’ and clearly stating: “They want to transfer an ecological bomb from one neighborhood to another. We do not want that, nor will we allow it.”



# SUCCESSFUL ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGNS



## ACTIVISTS' VICTORY: ESTABLISHING OVERSIGHT OF MOUNT KONJUH

On July 23, 2024, at its 66th regular session, the Government of Tuzla Canton adopted the Report from the cantonal Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environmental Protection regarding the implementation of protective measures in the Konjuh Protected Landscape. This has finally established a set of anti-corruption measures, halted illegal logging from the Konjuh area, and created the conditions necessary to preserve Mount Konjuh. The Report notes that the construction of the monitoring cabin and the installation of video surveillance on the Kladanj side are in the final stages, with completion expected within a few days. The video surveillance will serve as a protective measure against the abuse of logging, which non-governmental organizations have detected. Since this concerns a section of the regional road under the jurisdiction of the FBiH Government, the Government of Tuzla Canton has requested the FBiH Government to explore the possibility of installing a checkpoint. Following the completion of the work (establishment of the information point and video surveillance), the Ministry will also send a letter to the Public Company "Šume" Tuzla Canton via the Tuzla Canton Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management, and Forestry, requesting the cessation of vehicles currently carrying out regular logging in the Konjuh Protected Landscape to ensure control over logging in the area.

These activities directly result from a two-year effort by the Karton Revolucija activists, whose goal is to establish protection for Mount Konjuh and halt uncontrolled logging and ecological damage on the Kladanj side. Additionally, on Thursday, July 25, 2024, a final meeting of the expert team for the revision of the Report on the designation of part of Mount Konjuh as a protected landscape will be held. The team's task is to determine the need to expand the protection zone of Mount Konjuh, especially considering watercourses such as the Oskova River basin and Paučko Lake. Once the expert team's activities are finalized, the necessary conditions will be created to halt logging in the most vulnerable parts of Mount Konjuh. The implementation of these measures will create the conditions for saving Mount Konjuh on one hand, and on the other, stop one of the largest corrupt and criminal activities related to logging that has been occurring on the Kladanj side for the past 14 years. It is very important to highlight that after 14 years of non-implementation, starting this year, trucks exporting timber from Mount Konjuh will be required to pass control at the exit points from the Kladanj side, which was not previously the case, while the same practice has long been established at the Banovići side checkpoint. Additionally, after the implementation of all the aforementioned activities, representatives of the "Cardboard Revolution" movement will request the Tuzla Canton Prosecutor's Office to prosecute those responsible for the failure to enforce the law over the past 14 years. The activists of the "Cardboard Revolution" movement express sincere thanks to all those who contributed to achieving these significant results, especially to the honorable individuals within the system whose support was instrumental in achieving the goal.



## PROGRESS MADE IN THE FIGHT TO PROTECT FORESTS AND RIVERS

The Aarhus Center in BiH continues its efforts to ensure the preservation of natural resources and the citizens' right to a healthy environment. This non-governmental organization, committed to promoting transparency and public participation in environmental decision-making, works to protect forests and rivers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Special attention is given to safeguarding protected areas and forests of high conservation value. The Aarhus Center insists on a transparent decision-making process, where the public has the right to be informed and participate in accordance with the Aarhus Convention. Recently, the Aarhus Center has undertaken a series of activities related to the Law on Forests in the Federation of BiH. Their active advocacy for the adoption of a law that will effectively protect forests, including organizing and supporting public campaigns, protests, and gatherings, such as the protest on Earth Day, April 22. They have also participated in working meetings with representatives from the FBiH Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management, and Forestry, as well as conferences like "Legal Framework for Forest Conservation: Challenges and Perspectives" in Sarajevo.

"The law's main goals include protecting forests from illegal logging, reducing unauthorized occupation of state forest land, and increasing forest revenue and stability. Additionally, the law provides penalties for violations such as failing to address the consequences of logging, not carrying out reforestation, and improper waste disposal. The law also prohibits the trade of state-owned forests and forest land, as well as their privatization, and requires that the boundaries of state forests be clearly marked. The new law is expected to facilitate access to EU funds and improve the forestry sector, including creating new jobs and enhancing ecology in the Federation of BiH," the Aarhus Center representatives said in their statement. The Forest Law in the Federation of BiH has passed the public consultation phase and is expected to be in parliamentary procedure by the end of the year, marking a significant step forward given that the FBiH has been without this law for 15 years. In addition to their work with forests, the Aarhus Center in BiH has continued its fight for the preservation of river ecosystems, which are increasingly under pressure from plans to build small hydropower plants (SHPPs). In May of this year, the Aarhus Center filed a lawsuit against the approval of the study for the SHPP Obarnica project on the Lašva River, resulting in a temporary halt of the project. This case highlights the need for careful consideration of ecological, social, and economic aspects when planning such projects.

The Aarhus Center in BiH continues to fight for better environmental protection through legal initiatives, public campaigns, and collaboration with local communities, civil society organizations, and international partners. Their mission is clear: to secure citizens' right to a healthy environment and transparent decision-making and to protect natural resources for future generations.

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## FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN MATERNITY HOSPITALS

As part of the campaign "Sexual Extortion is Corruption. Let's Break the Silence!" implemented by the Helsinki Assembly of Citizens Banja Luka, significant progress has been made. Victims of sexual extortion can now also contact the Institution of the Ombudsman for Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will act within its competencies. This was highlighted on April 16 during a meeting between the Helsinki Assembly of Citizens Banja Luka and the Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Nevenko Vranješ, and expert associate Mirjana Štulić from the Department for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.





## CONFERENCE “HOW A FOREST BECOMES A THICKET”

Organized by the NGO Fojničani, and as part of the project “Corruption is in the Forest!” the two-day Conference “How a Forest Becomes a Thicket?” was held to bring together all relevant stakeholders who could contribute to combating institutional corruption and illegal activities in the forests of the Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDC) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). Through three panels, representatives from the public, civil society, the academic community, and relevant services and ministries discussed current problems in forestry and the improvement of mechanisms for the protection and sustainable management of forests. Special attention was given to the consequences of the FBiH Government’s decision to change the designation of forest land and temporarily use forest land for other purposes. Commenting on this controversial Decision, FBiH Prime Minister Nermin Nikšić referred to the forests around Vareš as “thickets.” Hence, the Conference was symbolically named “How a Forest Becomes a Thicket?” The Conference also helped illuminate answers to other pressing issues, including the long-standing delay in passing the Forestry Law in the Federation of BiH. As a result of this legislative vacuum, the sale of natural resources and favoring various concessionaires is becoming increasingly evident, representing a classic form of institutional corruption. Citizens and representatives of civil society organizations shared their experiences combating illegal and corrupt practices in forestry. The Conference focused on both the legal and financial aspects of sustainable forest management and the integration of economic and ecological interests in forestry. Mechanisms for protecting valuable forests through protected natural areas were also discussed, focusing on Matinski Vis in Žepče, Babina-Tvrtkovac in Zenica, and Trstionica in Kakanj. Citizens’ initiatives for preserving these areas still lack sufficient support from relevant authorities, which, through their calculative approach based on voter numbers, actually support illegal logging, poaching, and other illegal activities. As part of the Conference, a visit was arranged to the valuable forest area, the Trstionica primeval forest in Kakanj, one of the few remaining primeval forests in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This visit aimed to draw public attention to the increasing devastation of valuable forests, which need urgent protection and management improvement according to international standards. It is worth noting that last year, the Municipal Council of Kakanj unanimously adopted a Decision giving consent for the establishment of the protected area “Gornja Trstionica - Bukovica,” which is indeed a positive but rare practice in local communities. However, for a significant step in protecting the valuable forests of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, an urgent reaction from the Government and the Cantonal Assembly, which are responsible for enacting appropriate laws and modernizing management, is also needed. The recent bare logging of 18 hectares of forest in Tešanj demonstrated the scale of the disaster caused by the lack of adequate protection and management, especially for forests planned as protected natural areas. The Conference thus also addressed whether ignoring spatial plans that foresee the protection and preservation of valuable forests is also a form of institutional corruption. The Conference was professional and highly successful, mainly due to the presence of representatives from FBiH and cantonal levels of government, the Inspectorate Administration, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor’s Office of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, representatives from the Forest Management Agency, and civil society organizations, as well as citizens and other stakeholders...

# ANTIKORUPCIJA

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» WHO SAYS OUR POLICE ARE DUMB? TODAY IN BANJA LUKA, THE RS POLICE MADE AN IMMEASURABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE RESTART PERFORMANCE «

"Whenever a democracy is born, there's always some dictator ready to kill it."  
Today, on May 22, 2024, the Republika Srpska Police decided to participate in the political-satirical performance organized on the streets of Banja Luka by the Restart Srpska Association.

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» AFTER THE MINISTRY OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS RECEIVED NO POSITIVE REVIEWS FROM AUDITORS, ANOTHER RS GOVERNMENT MINISTRY HAS ALSO FACED THE SAME OUTCOME«

With the publication of reports for the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of European Integration and International Cooperation on April 24, 2024, the RS Supreme Public Sector Audit Office has completed one-fifth of the financial audits planned for 2024. To date, 19 out of 90 planned reports on financial audits for 2023 have been released.

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» CHP FILES CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST MILORAD DODIK AND ŽELJKA CVIJANOVIĆ FOR PROVIDING FALSE TESTIMONY IN COURT, AND AGAINST PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES FOR TURNING SERIOUS COURT PROCEEDINGS INTO A FARCE «

The Center for Human Policy (CHP) has filed criminal charge against the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, and BiH Presidency member Željka Cvijanović for providing false testimony, as well as against the acting district public prosecutor and the court panel for legal violations by the judge and prosecutor in the case against the former mayor of Doboj, one of those responsible for the deaths of 11 residents of Doboj and damage amounting to several hundred million KM in the 2014 floods.

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Read Antikorupcija.info for the latest on citizen-led anti-corruption initiatives.

# ANTIKORUPCIJA



# FOLLOW TENDERS

## Pratimo Tendere Wins Recognition from the Journalists' Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina

One of the critical tasks of the "Pratimo tendere" portal is to provide citizens and journalists with information on how institutions spend public funds. In addition to collecting, analyzing, and identifying irregularities in public procurement processes, the "Pratimo tendere" portal informs the public about detected irregularities and legal violations through its own articles and multimedia content. On May 3, International Press Freedom Day, the Journalists' Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina awarded its traditional annual prizes, with special recognition going to the "Pratimo tendere" portal. "Pratimo tendere has proven to be a valuable tool for the journalistic community. Numerous journalists from across Bosnia and Herzegovina use the portal's analyses in their reporting daily. We are honored to receive such recognition," portal's editor, Slobodan Golubović, said in his statement. The portal's multiple functionalities provide access to data and statistics on public procurement processes in BiH, establishing "Pratimo tendere" as a valuable anti-corruption tool in the media community.

### Monitoring for Better Practices

Examples of changes in the practices of public institutions, agencies, and companies confirm the importance of ongoing anti-corruption monitoring of public procurement. The portal Pratimo tendere highlighted the actions of the Cantonal Hospital Zenica, which had avoided dividing a BAM 600,000 tender for procuring 848 different goods and services into lots. Pratimo tendere pointed out the shortcomings of the Cantonal Hospital Zenica, which was then addressed by the Office for Review of Complaints, leading to the annulment of the public procurement procedure. After the tender was canceled, the Cantonal Hospital Zenica announced a new tender for procuring surgical instruments, which, this time, was divided into lots, and contracts were ultimately successfully concluded with several bidders.

For more details, visit [pratimotendere.ba](http://pratimotendere.ba).



### Follow Tenders, Follow Your Money!

**Web:** [www.pratimotendere.ba](http://www.pratimotendere.ba)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/pratimotendere.ba/>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/pratimotendere.ba/>

**X:** <https://twitter.com/PratimotendereB>

Learn more on the portal [antikorupcija.info](http://antikorupcija.info)



# PRAVILO ĆUTANJA

## IZAZOVI I PERSPEKTIVE UZBUNJIVANJA U BIH

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### ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITIES OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BIH

- Transparency International in Bosnia and Herzegovina has released an analytical report *The Rule of Silence: Challenges and Perspectives of Whistleblowing in BiH*, which provides a brief overview of the state of whistleblowing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The report attempts to answer why whistleblowing in the public and private sectors in BiH remains an endemic phenomenon despite the perception among citizens, the business and academic communities, and civil society organizations that corruption is widespread in BiH. The report also provides recommendations on how to improve whistleblower protection policies in BiH, particularly regarding the need for advancements in the regulatory and institutional framework and capacity building. More details can be found at: [https://ti-bih.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/T-BIH\\_PRAVILO-CUTANJA-WEB-B5-1.pdf](https://ti-bih.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/T-BIH_PRAVILO-CUTANJA-WEB-B5-1.pdf).
- Following reports of public resource misuse and early campaigning from Transparency International in BiH (TI BiH), the Central Election Commission imposed five fines totaling 16,500 KM on political entities during June. The SNSD was fined 4,000 KM because one of its officials, the Mayor of Jezero, Snežana Ružičić, abused the asphalt paving of a 160-meter road for party promotion. She presented this project, allegedly worth around 25,000 KM, on social media, stating that “SNSD paves the way even to villages where earth meets the sky!” Furthermore, the HNP was fined for advertising on the video wall of the public enterprise Radio Tomislavgrad, whose director was also a candidate for this party in the previous elections. TI BiH reported this case to the Central Election Commission, which determined that it was a paid advertisement, and the party was not penalized for resource misuse but only for premature campaigning, with a fine of 3,000 KM. Additionally, the CEC ordered the removal of this advertisement from the LED panel on the JP Radio Tomislavgrad building. A fine of 3,000 KM was imposed on the DNS because the president of this party’s municipal committee in Zvornik and advisor to the BiH Minister of Security, Dobrica Kucalović, promoted his party’s program before the official start of the election campaign.



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