

## **Campaign on Concrete Issues, Not Fear**

In a few months, BiH citizens will go to the polls and elect new government representatives. The challenges facing the country are enormous: mass unemployment, falling living standards, little investment in jobs, and the continuing scourge of crime and corruption – and on top of this, millions of citizens are now dealing with the aftermath of the recent floods.

Unfortunately, certain politicians and parties have conveniently avoided talking about what they have done and would do to address these problems, choosing instead to distort the debate by creating tension and fear.

Disagreements over public monuments and instances of embracing convicted war criminals have recently come into the spotlight. There have also been a number of cases of vandalism against places of worship and reports of physical attacks on people perceived to be from different communities, including attacks on children.

Every politician, every religious leader, every public official must make it absolutely clear that exclusion and intolerance are unacceptable at all times. Those who promote or engage in exclusion and intolerance place themselves outside the political mainstream, and in some cases outside the law. They must be treated accordingly.

The floods have demonstrated yet again that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are not living in the past, as some of their leaders would wish, but are willing to help one another in times of need, regardless of community or origin.

Some members of the political elite have used the crisis as another opportunity to display the disunity, inaction, incompetence and irrelevance that for too long has plagued BiH.

While these politicians are quick to criticize each other or the dysfunction of institutions as the source of this country's problems, they fail to mention that their own parties are or have been part of the same ruling coalitions they denounce as failures.

BiH citizens have made it clear that the elections in October should be different; they want solutions, not recriminations. They want consensus not division. They want public debate that deals with today's problems – and they absolutely will not be satisfied with rhetoric, particularly negative rhetoric, as an excuse for failure or a substitute for practical action.

It's time for a discussion of concrete policy proposals with an eye to the future development of this country, not continued attempts to focus solely on the past.