

Campaign Watch 2012

Newsletter 04



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Newsletter No. 4

April 29, 2012

Parliamentary, local and presidential elections in Serbia are scheduled to take place on May 6, 2012. A total of 7,058,683 voters will elect a new 250-seat National Assembly, as well as mayors in major cities and deputies in over 160 city and municipal assemblies.

At a session held on April 20, the Republic Election Commission (RIK) completed and proclaimed the official list of parties, coalitions and independent candidates running for election into the 250-seat People's Assembly (Parliament) of the Republic of Serbia. A list's representatives are elected if it wins a minimum of 5% votes. This rule does not apply to ethnic minorities, whose lists necessitate the so-called "natural threshold"¹ to be represented in Parliament.

Candidate lists²

Election to the People's Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

May 6, 2012

List Nr.	Ticket name	Number of candidates
1.	Choice for a Better Life – Boris Tadić	250
2.	Serbian Radical Party – Dr Vojislav Šešelj	250
3.	United Regions of Serbia – Mlađan Dinkić	245
4.	Čedomir Jovanović – PREOKRET (Turnaround) (Liberal Democratic Party, Serbian Renewal Movement, Socialdemocratic Union, A Wealthy Serbia, Vojvodina Party, Democratic Party of Sandžak, Green Ecological Party –	250

¹ The number of valid ballots cast in a constituency divided by 250 (seats in Parliament).

² Both lists copied from the RIK website and translated into English.

	The Greens, Party of Serbia's Bulgarians)	
5.	LET US SET SERBIA IN MOTION – TOMISLAV NIKOLIĆ (Serbian Progressive Party, New Serbia, Association of Small and Medium-sized enterprises and Entrepreneurs of Serbia, Coalition of Refugee Associations in Serbia, Serbia's Strength Movement - BK, People's Peasant Party, Bosniak People's Party, Democratic Party of Macedonians, Roma Party, Vlach Unification Party, Movement of Socialists, Serbia's Economic Rebirth Movement)	250
6.	DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF SERBIA – VOJISLAV KOŠTUNICA	250
7.	IVICA DAČIĆ – SOCIALIST PARTY OF SERBIA, Party of United Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS), Unified Serbia (JS)	250
8.	Dveri (GATE) FOR SERBIA'S LIFE	209
9.	VAJDASAGI MAGYAR SZOVETSEG – PASZTOR ISTVAN – UNION OF VOJVODINA HUNGARIANS – IŠTVAN PASTOR	250
10.	REFORMIST PARTY – Prof. Milan Višnjić PhD	175
11.	PARTY OF DEMOCRATIC ACTION OF SANDŽAK – Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin	30
12.	WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' MOVEMENT	190
13.	SOCIALDEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE – nebojša leković	182
14.	ALL TOGETHER: BDZ, GSM, DZH, DZVM, SLOVAK PARTY – EMIR ELFIĆ ³	68
15.	COALITION OF ALBANIANS OF THE PREŠEVO VALLEY - KOALICIONI I SHQIPTAREVE TE LUGINES SE PRESHEVES -	11
16.	MONTENEGRINE PARTY – NENAD STEVOVIĆ	52
17.	COMMUNIST PARTY – JOSIP BROZ ⁴	60
18.	NONE OF THE LISTED ANSWERS	93

Republic Election Commission completed and proclaimed the official list of candidates running for the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia, too. The election will be held on May 6, 2012. Should none of the nominees win absolute majority of the ballots cast, two best placed candidates will compete in a runoff on May 20, 2012.

List Nr.	Candidate	Nominated by
1.	Prof. Zoran Stanković	United Regions of Serbia (URS)
2.	Vladan Glišić	Dveri
3.	Boris Tadić	DS-led Coalition <i>Choice for a Better Life</i>
4.	Vojislav Koštunica	<i>Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)</i>

³ Coalition of ethnic minority parties in Vojvodina.

⁴ (Founder of SFR Yugoslavia) Tito's grandson.

5.	Prof. Zoran Dragišić	Workers' and Peasants' Movement
6.	Jadranka Šešelj	Serbian Radical Party (SRS)
7.	Muamer Zukorlić	Independent candidate
8.	Danica Grujičić	Socialdemocratic Alliance (SDS)
9.	Ivica Dačić	<i>Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)</i> -led Coalition
10.	Čedomir Jovanović	Preokret - <i>Turnaround</i>
11.	Istvan Pasztor	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians – Vajdasagi Magyar Szovetseg
12.	Tomislav Nikolić	Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)-led Coalition

* * *

The final phase of the campaign is characterized by several features that are conducive to the conclusion that the contenders' conduct is often below the internationally accepted criteria for free, fair and honest campaigning and election procedures. Notwithstanding some mutual hostility shared by opposing parties - which is inherent to an election competition – Serbia's political scene features a high level of pollution with unfounded accusations, insult, libel, catering to the lowest echelons of taste and public conduct. In addition to that, the 2012 parliamentary, presidential, provincial and local election campaign is characterized, *inter alia*, by:

- a) Aggressive campaigning focused on repeating propaganda slogans rather than attempting to offer an "inventory" of the nation's condition and start a debate on what to do to improve it;
- b) The campaign is dominated by political leaders and their pursuit of personal promotion, with no space for putting forward coherent programs to change the society deep in crisis: the ailing economy, inefficient politics, endemic capillary corruption, long overdue reforms of education, pensions, health care, judicial and security systems;
- c) Almost without exception, political leaders⁵ have made promises and pledges blown out of all proportions, ranging from thousands of kilometers of freeways to hundreds

⁵ During a panel on economic programs of election competitors, Božidar Djelić, a high ranking DS official said that Italian authorities are contemplating far-reaching changes in foreign investment legislation because "most Italian firms are now investing in Serbia" instead of in their own country.

of billions of Euros in credits, loans and donations from friends abroad, or construction of "the world's largest solar energy park" in Serbia;

- d) Coverage of the campaign in the media has once again demonstrated that the media, albeit nominally free, are tightly controlled by party and business elites. Examples of unbalanced, unfair, biased and even inaccurate reporting on various contenders' campaign are too numerous to list. In partnership with the media analysts of the Slovak *MEMO 98* think tank, Belgrade-based *Bureau for Social Research* (BIRODI) is implementing an in-depth research project on the media coverage of the campaign: http://www.birodi.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83:monitoring-medija-u-predizbornom-periodu-izbori-2012 ;
- e) There have been numerous examples of use of public resources during the campaign. Transparency Serbia is carrying out a project aimed at monitoring this aspect of the campaign: http://www.transparentnost.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=28&Itemid=&lang=sr

Due to a large number of cases which vividly depict the election campaign context as described above, the Campaign Watch 2012 Newsletter limits itself to citing a sample of such examples which best illustrate the atmosphere. Examples were supplied by a network of civil society organizations on the ground, along with being a result of monitoring media and other reports.

Contrary to the clear obligations stipulated by the *Law on Election of People's Deputies* (<http://www.ombudsman.rs/attachments/ZAKON%20o%20izboru%20narodnih%20poslanika.pdf>), the People's Assembly has not elected the Supervisory Board (§§ 99 and 100 of the said Law) whose duty is to supervise both the election campaign and process, with special emphasis on compliance with legal provisions, democratic standards and norms, and react to occurrences of hate speech, discrimination based on ethnic descent, confession, gender, etc, as well as to the behavior of the media in that regard. It should be noted that no Supervisory Board was established on the occasion of the 2008 election as well, as the OSCE ODIHR Observer Mission noted in its report (<http://www.osce.org/sr/odihr/elections/serbia/33212>) on the 2008. Serbian elections.

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1. A tear gas bomb was thrown at a club in Niš and a young girl injured where a young Roma music group was about to do a concert on April 20. Although there are no tangible results of the police investigation, observers tend to interpret the attack as a form of "pressure in the pre-election period". Over the years, Niš has seen numerous attacks on members of its large Roma community. Most of these cases have remained unresolved.

2. In an interview to *Danas* daily on Apr. 20, Rodoljub Šabić, Commissioner for the Access to Public Information and Protection of Personal Data, said that parties and coalitions contending the elections "are using databases in authorities' possession" for campaign purposes. In some cases these databases contained sensitive data on groups or persons who require special protection: pregnant women, members of ethnic minorities, etc. Mr. Šabić has pressed charges in a number of cases, but there was no reaction on the part of law enforcement agencies.

3. Ex-President and presidential candidate Boris Tadić attended the funeral of tennis player Novak Đoković's grandfather on Apr. 21, although the burial was to take place in a narrow family circle. There is no record that Mr. Tadić has known the deceased personally. Mr. Tadić's attendance was widely publicized in most print and electronic media.

4. Vladan Glišić, *Dveri's* presidential candidate, said in a statement published in *Politika* daily on Apr. 22 that "the fight against gays and tycoons is as important as the struggle for Kosovo".

5. SNS President and presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolić April 22 called on Serbian voters not to give their vote to small parties, expressing his "wish that a two-party system would be created in Serbia, where two great parties would replace each other".

6. *Gay Straight Alliance* (GSA - <http://gsa.org.rs/>) issued a statement on April 22 calling upon the LGBT community to take part in the elections and vote for political parties willing and ready to work for the improvement of that community's position in the society. GSA sent

a questionnaire to election contenders in order to research views on issues pertaining to the position and role of the LGBT community in Serbia. To date, only two candidates responded.

7. In an interview given to the national TV's 1st channel on April 23, President of the *Socialist Party of Serbia* (SPS) Ivica Dačić who is also First Vice-president of the Government, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister, talked about the security issues in Kosovo and used the pejorative term "Šiptari" (derived from "Shqiptar" or "Shqipëtar") when referring to Kosovo Albanians.

8. As the campaign progresses and slogans referring to the resolve to do away with corruption and organized crime are to be heard in all corners of the political arena, Interior Minister Ivica Dačić decided to write his Ministry's exploits in that area big on his coalition's election banner. After the Interior Ministry arrested several hundred narcotics dealers Serbia-wide, Minister Dačić called a press-conference in his Party's headquarters and informed the public on the crackdown sitting in front of a large SPS election poster. On other occasions Minister Dačić appears in his ministerial capacity and in the Ministry's headquarters or other places not associated with his Party or coalition, but often accompanied by his running mates from other coalition partners and officials of affiliated political groups or individuals.

9. Use and misuse of public resources for campaign purposes assumes increasing intensity and varying forms. More frequent during their tenure since 2008, Government Ministers tour the country and visit factories, institutions, farms and building sites. *Transparency Serbia* reports on numerous instances where these very officials, after accomplishing their mission in their capacity as Government officials, almost immediately involve in party-political campaign activities carried out at the same places.

10. *Gay Lesbian Info Center* (GLIC - <http://www.gayecho.com/glic/>) regrets in an April 24 press release that no LGBT person is to be found among the candidates running for election. GLIC called upon the LGBT community to participate in the election and thus contribute to the suppression of homophobia.

11. *New Serbia* (NS) President Velimir Ilić, who is among the frontrunners on the SNS-led ticket, said at a rally that he hoped that SNS leader Tomislav Nikolić and DSS President Vojislav Koštunica will win, so that "Serbia will finally have two Šumadija⁶ Serbs at its helm. I want to warn Serbia that after so many years ... a chance is finally at hand that Šumadija

⁶ A region in central Serbia, generally referred to as „the heart of Serbia“.

Serbs lead Serbia again. A Montenegrin can rule Serbia no more", Mr. Ilić said. Mr. Ilić's statement was condemned by several political parties, but not by SNS and DSS.

12. Presidential candidates devote a portion of their campaign to sending out signals related to foreign political and economic relations. Boris Tadić visited Italy and Germany in the quest for foreign investment in Serbia, while Čedomir Jovanović aims to substantiate his intention to build new relations in the post-Yugoslav region by visits to Croatia and Montenegro and talks with top politicians there. Aleksandar Vučić, however, traveled to Croatia only to visit areas inhabited by ethnic Serbs, and examine "possibilities of assisting them economically".

13. SNS-lead coalition's decision to bring former NYC Mayor Rudolf Giuliani to Serbia and boost its candidate for the post of mayor of Belgrade provoked an array of malicious and even hostile reactions among the members of the ruling coalition. Belgrade Mayor Dragan Đilas (DS), who is seeking reelection on May 6, reminded the public that Mr. Giuliani belongs to those who approved of the 1999 NATO air raids against the then FRY, and suggested that the latter is not welcome in Belgrade. Belgrade critics did not fail to make references to Mr. Giuliani's support to Kosovo Albanians and his alleged Bosnian descent.

14. In an apparent attempt to avoid the election legislation provision that a list needs a minimum of 5% of the vote to enter Parliament, the *None of the Listed Answers* party (NOPO – Nr. 18 on the list) registered itself as an ethnic minority party representing the Vlach community. As such, NOPO could win seats in Parliament if supported by around 15,000 voters (the "natural threshold" at the 2008 election) as opposed to around 200,000 needed by other contenders. NOPO's election program contains no reference to the situation and concerns of the Vlach community in Serbia, but it devotes much attention to ideas close to the extreme right wing of the Serbian political spectrum: Point 18 of a document *Initiative for the Salvation of Serbia*, issued by a group of authors writing for *The New Serbian Political Thought*, and subsequently adopted as NOPO's program, demands "a ban of homosexual propaganda and promotion among minors".

15. *Citizens' Initiative of the Gorani People* complained that "a half of the Gorani population in Serbia have been deleted from the voters' registry", and threatened to organize a picket to disturb the Republic Election Commission's (RIK) function. RIK denies these charges and insists that it is the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, State Administration and Local Self-government that is in charge of administering the voters' registry.

16. Dragoslav Ćirković, the ruling DS's candidate for mayor's office in Niš, visited a children's day care center in his town and spoke to the personnel and children: "I am so glad that it is

in children the Niš municipality of Medijana has found men, believing men. For what is a man if he does not believe? In that case I am not quite sure that he is a man at all".

17. A full-fledged poster war is yet another feature of Serbian election atmosphere. Whereas parties' activists place their propaganda posters all over places where it is forbidden by law – such as electricity and telephone poles, traffic signs, schools, police stations and other public buildings – the authorities confine themselves to calling upon the perpetrators not to do that. On the other hand, teams of activists trained to destroy or damage opponents' posters are not idle: with necessary equipment, they drive in fast cars and remove, smudge or otherwise damage posters attached by others and disappear before the authorities can intervene – if at all.

18. After a meeting April 24 with Massimo Calearo, CEO of the Italian "Calearo Group" which produces navigation equipment and other electronic components, presidential candidate Boris Tadić said that the Italian company's factory in Niš "will produce telecommunication and navigation equipment which will be built into the cars manufactured by the most powerful automotive companies such as *Ferrari, Maserati, Bentley, Renault* and others". Mr. Tadić's statement was widely publicized in numerous print and electronic media throughout Serbia. In an interview to Blic daily April 26, Mr. Calearo said that his company is "examining the possibilities of setting up a scientific-technological park in Niš." He went on to say that "Serbia today is not No. 1 in terms of manual production. There are much cheaper countries, such as Tunisia and China".

19. Social media networks have become a significant battleground ahead of the May 6 elections, *SE Times* (<http://www.setimes.com/>) reports on April 25. The two main contenders – the ruling *Democratic Party* (DS) and the opposition *Serbian Progressive Party* (SNS) – spare no effort to attract voters via the internet. The SNS created a large team to conduct its campaign on the social networks. An SNS official says: Our objective is to address young voters". Whereas SNS focuses on *Facebook* (where it has 53,000 registered fans as opposed to 36, for DS) as the primary vehicle in mobilizing young voters, DS stresses *Twitter*.

20. A total of 42 citizens have filed complaints with the *Republic Broadcasting Agency* (RRA) during the week between April 17 and 24, expressing misgivings about election contenders' behavior as represented in the electronic media. A complaint was also filed against Mr. Nenad Čanak, President of the *League of Socialdemocrats of Vojvodina* (LSV) who allegedly spreads war propaganda, because he played an World War 2 partisan tune in his video clip.

21. A group of employees of a public road construction and maintenance company in Novi Sad informed journalists on April 26 that the Democratic Party members of the management have pressurized them to collect "secure votes" for DS lest they want to be transferred to lower posts or lose their jobs altogether. These workers supplied to journalists SMS messages and sound recordings substantiating their complaints.

22. At a mass rally staged Apr. 26 in Belgrade by the SNS, Russian President Putin's special envoy Aleksandr Iltyakov addressed the crowd insisting on the religious kinship between the two nations. His exclamations "My Orthodox brothers" were welcomed by the crowds cries "Russia, Russia!"

23. State Public Prosecutor Zagorka Dolovac issued Apr. 26 a statement warning presidential candidates and other politicians "not to misuse the judiciary during the campaign for political purposes". Ms. Dolovac did not specify to what incidents and/or persons she was referring.

24. Whereas representatives of opposition parties insist that the 2012 campaign is "one of the dirtiest ever", DS Vice-President Dragan Šutanovac said that this year's campaign "is one of the most decent since the 1990s".

25. In violation of the Law of the Army of Serbia, which expressly stipulates that the Army cannot be used for political purposes, presidential candidate (and ex-President) Boris Tadić is pictured on many posters and billboards saluting a lineup of the Army's Presidential Guard.

26. Since the inception of the 2012 campaign, Mr. Predrag Grgić, Chairman of the Republic Election Commission, has made personal donations amounting to a total of 150,000 RSD to the Democratic Party. Asked by journalists whether that is compatible with his position in the authority, he said: "I donated the money in support to a local list. I see no problem in it".