



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 5, 2018

Bosnian Village to Politicians: Go Away!

“You’ve been lying to us for years! No party is welcome in Podgora!!” shouts a banner strung across a street in Podgora, a poor village in Bosnia that is fed up with politicians and their empty promises.

The Bosnian general elections will be held on October 7, and the 700 residents of Podgora, which is situated about 18 miles from Sarajevo, don’t want any politicking in their town, reports [Agence France-Presse](#). They’re so serious about it that they collectively ponied up \$58 for the banner — “a hefty sum in a community where most are unemployed, living off of small vegetable farms and livestock,” writes AFP — and, when some politicians ignored it and posted campaign ads anyway, they tore the posters down and spray-painted on the back on the banner, “Did you read it? People have had enough.”

Enough what?

“Enough lies!” Adi Silajdzic, an out-of-work 47-year-old father, told AFP. “We’re fed up that every time they come they tell us stories and make promises to ensure votes. And every time, on the day after the elections, it is as if nothing had happened, as if they did not even come to see us.”

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Podgorans’ frustration is understandable. Bosnia was devastated by ethnic conflict in the 1990s and has never fully recovered from it. Officially, a third of the population is unemployed — the actual number is probably higher — leading tens of thousands of Bosnians, especially youths, to emigrate. The weak central government, with its “sprawling bureaucracy,” has not made good on its many promises to repair the damage from the war and engage in ongoing infrastructure maintenance and improvement, according to AFP.

“Our village is in 2018, yet it looks like the war just ended here,” resident Amir Solak told cable news channel [N1](#).

With little political power, Podgorans have largely been left to fend for themselves.

“We are the ones who replace bulbs for the street lights,” said Silajdzic.

“We do not have a single garbage container, there is no bus, and the drinking water supply system was constructed before the war with asbestos cement pipes that were not replaced,” he added.

Nevertheless, when election time rolls around, the politicians all descend on Podgora, trying to win votes by vowing to fix these problems.





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“They have promised so many times to pave the streets that the cement should be at least one meter thick by now,” joked Osman Hasic, a 56-year-old retired steelworker.

In fact, the streets are still dirt that turns to mud when the autumn rains start to fall.

Actually, that’s a bit unfair. At least one local road is partially paved, notes AFP:

After three years of work municipal, [sic] authorities last month celebrated paving 900 meters (yards) of a local road.

It had “nothing to do” with the election campaign, according to the municipality of Breza, in charge of Podgora.

But the ribbon-cutting was held before the final layer of cement was applied, the villagers said, stoking skepticism.

Of course, there’s always the next election, and the party that is out of power invariably promises to address the people’s grievances in exchange for being voted into power. After the election, however, it’s usually “Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.”

“We changed, voted for one [party], then for others, but it’s still the same,” Vedad Silajdzic, 43, a construction worker, told AFP.

“They are all the same,” seconded Hasic. “They fight for the armchair and once in it, they do not think about people anymore.”

Bosnians have learned the hard way that government is a slow, clumsy institution peopled by self-serving individuals who are frequently more interested in retaining power than in ensuring that government performs even its most rudimentary functions. Westerners who view this same institution as the solution to all of man’s problems would do well to spend a few days in Podgora, where they would discover just how little most government officials really care about the people they are supposed to serve.

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